LIFE OF SRI AUROBINDO

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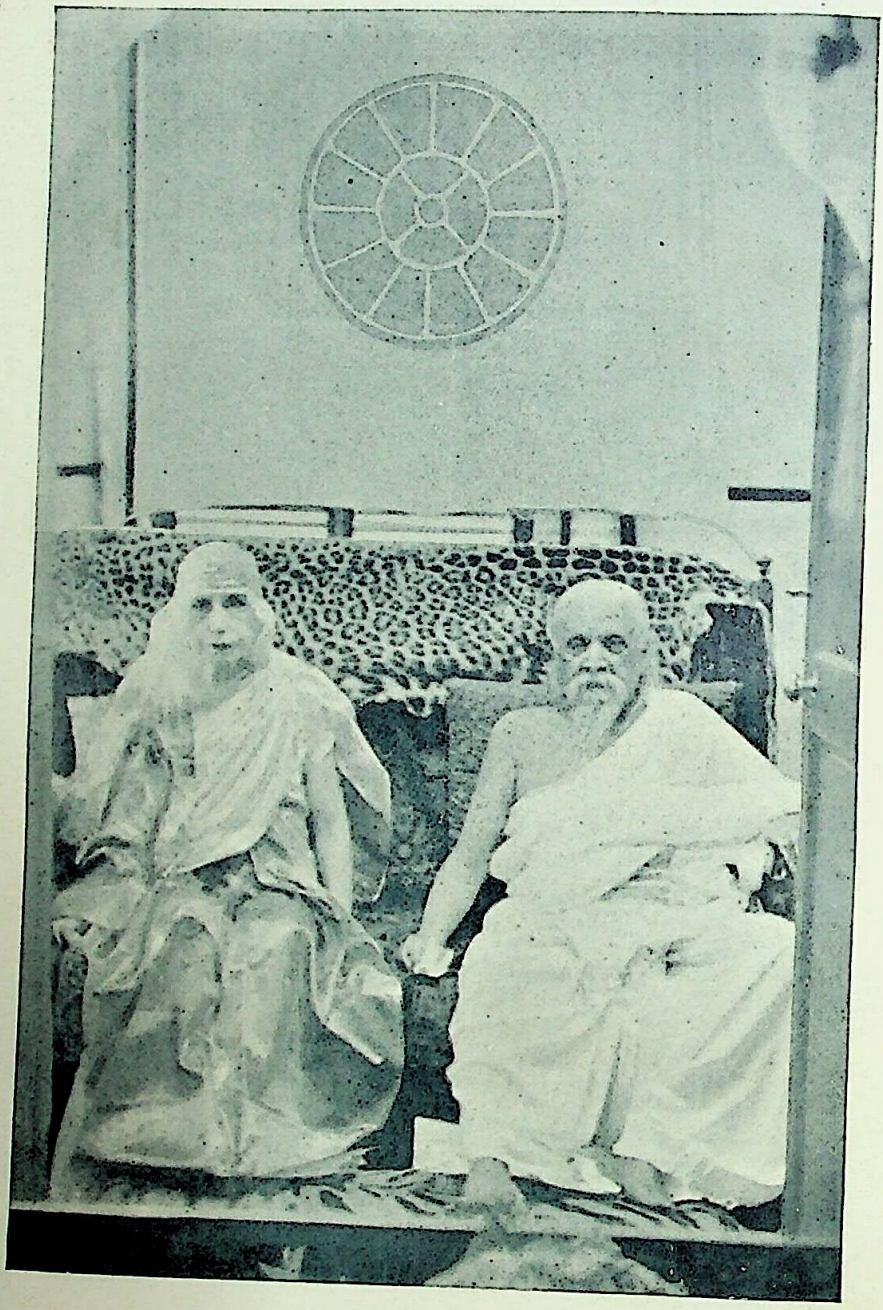

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SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM
PONDICHERRY

PREFACE

"No one can write about my life because it has not been on the surface for men to see" wrote Sri Aurobindo. On another occasion when requested to give his consent to a disciple in helping a writer of his biography he wrote in his inimitable way "I do not want to be murdered by my own disciples in cold print".

How could one probe into such an inner life,—infinitely rich not only in its human content of intellectual, emotional and volitional movements but filled with many-sided spiritual experiences which transcend the human consciousness? The movement of ascent of consciousness from Mind to the Supermind, from the human to the Divine, is accompanied in his case by a descent with that Light and Power into the human instrumentation,—mind, life and body. A Yogi's real life is his inner life,—in fact, that is his only real life.

Even from the external point of view Sri Aurobindo's life presents a very great difficulty due to his being a versatile personality. He has been a professor, a scholar, a poet, a political leader, a journalist, a philosopher, a dramatist, an Indologist, a psychologist, a literary critic, a translator, an original interpreter of the Veda, the Upanishads and the Gita.

But there was a pressing reason which urged me to take up this task. In spite of his aversion to the writing of his biography, people who knew very little about him began to publish unauthorised books on his life and work. Some of them contained altogether fanciful accounts even of facts and incidents of his life. Among them may be mentioned Mr. Kulkarani's biography in Marathi. (Yogi Sri Aurobindo), Girijashanker Rai Chaudhuri's so called Life of Sri Aurobindo which appeared serially in the Bengali monthly, Udbodhan,—Hemchandra Das's story of the "revolutionary movement in Bengal."

I had occassion to refer to Sri Aurobindo all the doubtful points of these books for correction or corroboration. This gave me the

correct ground for his biography. I had been collecting materials myself since 1923.

The Baroda State service-records of Sri Aurobindo were secured by me in 1944 through Sj. D.B.Shukla's help and submitted to Sri Aurobindo. He corrected these in his own hand-writing.

Subsequently, my visit to England in 1955 enabled me to gather materials about his early life there which I have incorporated in this book (the fuller account is published in the small book, "Sri Aurobindo in England".)

There is enough authentic biographical material in his own letters and other writings which I have tried to put in chronological order. Where his own writing was not available, I have depended on contemporary evidence—mostly of those who were participants in the event or movement.

Certain portions selected from "Sri Aurobindo on Himself" and arranged in part III will give to the reader, some idea, in his own words, of the work which he did for others and for the world by using his Spiritual Power under Divine guidance. In this age of the atom-bomb which seems to drive humanity to peace through fear, the possibility and assurance of a dynamic use of Spiritual Power might open out a new and a more lasting way to peace and harmony for humanity.

And even with all these materials one can only indicate the landmarks of his inner life:—

1. His meeting with Vishnu Bhasker Lele and the experience of the Silent-Brahman Consciousness that never left him since then.

2. His confinement to a solitary cell in Alipore jail and his vivid experience of the Omnipresent Narayana.

3. His outer seclusion at Pondicherry and the crucial and significant fact of his meeting the Mother.

4. The descent of the Higher Power on the 24th of November 1926. As to the outer aspect of his life the output of literary work alone is staggering in its volume, variety and originality. His contribution to the political freedom of India can be properly felt by those who have lived through the stormy days of the Partition of Bengal when the national spirit burst out like a volcano on the placid, flat-ground of Indian politics. The voice of the awakened India was first heard week by week and day by day in fiery columns

of the "Vande Mataram" and the "Karmayogin". These papers breathed the lofty air of freedom charged with an idealism that raised the "dirty" field of politics to the heights of religious fervour and spirituality. It converted hundreds to a life of dedication to the cause of freedom of Mother India.

But over and above his solid contribution to literature and the struggle for freedom he has given a loftier vision to the modern world,—the vision of man's destiny of divine life on earth. This vision, accompanied by an active effort in collaboration with the Mother, has created out of almost nothing two institutions of international importance—the Ashram and Sri Aurobindo International University Centre where the pattern of the new life envisaged in his vision of man's destiny on earth is being worked out. These activities, undertaken during his outward retirement, have awakened, fostered and helped the deepest Spiritual aspirations of thousands of men and women of all races and creeds.

It is hoped that this book will help the reader to comprehend the great ideal through his own life. There are some repetitions in this book, which have been intentionally kept by me.

The form of the book may seem to some rather matter of fact. But I believe that the narrative of his life mainly in his own words would be found inspiring. The only claim that the book can make is that it is authentic as far as events, dates, views and opinions are concerned. The help rendered by my friends Sj. Krishnalal Bhatt and Sj. Vishnuprasad in preparing the manuscript must be here acknowledged.

A.B.Purani

I. "No one can write my life because it has not been on the surface for men to see". (Letters Dilip P. 287, "Tirtha Salil")

II. Once when a disciple asked Sri Aurobindo's permission to help a Marathi biographer in his task he declined and wrote : "I do not want to be murdered by my own disciples in cold print".

III. "The second fact is that I do not care a button about having my name in any blessed place. I was never ardent about fame even in my political days; I preferred to remain behind the curtain, push people without their knowing it and get things done. It was the confounded British Government that spoiled my game by prosecuting me and forcing me to be publicly known as "leader".

2-10-1934

Q : What is the truth behind personality ?

IV. Sri Aurobindo : There are many personalities in man. But the true person is also there; it is the Eternal thrown out in time as the Cosmic and the individual for a particular purpose, use or work. This true person is all the time conscious of his identity with the Cosmic.

1 January 1939

Part One

1. ANCESTRY

Dr. Krishna Dhan Ghose took his degree from the Medical College, Calcutta. His marriage took place in 1864, when he was 19 years of age, with the eldest daughter, Swarnalata, of Dr. Rajnarayan Bose according to the rites of Adi Brahmo Samaj. Swarnalata's age was 12 (twelve). Dr. K. D. Ghose had leanings towards the Brahmo Samaj. In 1869 Dr. K. D. Ghose went to England for further Medical studies. He returned in 1871 with the degree and in all outward manner a completely Anglicised man and an atheist in his belief. He joined the C.M.O.—the Civil Medical Service—and began as a Civil Surgeon. There was a vein of lunacy in Rajnarayan's family, one of his sons was mad. Swarnalata and her sister who was married to Krishna Kumar Mitter both suffered from hysteria.

Dr. K. D. Ghose's service

The greater period of his service was spent at Bhagalpur, Rangpur and Khulna. At Rangpur he managed to get a passage for water which was called "K. D. Canal" by the people.

After 1897 he served at Khulna and remained there till his death. When he went to England in 1869 for further study he had two sons Binoy Bhushan and Mono Mohan. He left them with Swarnalata and a nurse, Miss Pagett. Wherever he served he was very popular and was highly respected by all. He used to take a very prominent part in civic life. He interested himself in schools, hospitals, municipalities and other public bodies. The people of Khulna afterwards started a school in his name and a photograph of his was placed in the town hall. He was always kind to the poor and extremely generous, so much so that he could never make any savings from his pay. In the later part of his life he took to heavy drinking to forget the bitterness and tragedy of

his life. It is said that it was he who changed the whole face of the town of Khulna.

Children of K. D. Ghose and Swarnalata

They had five children : 1. Binoy Bhushan, 2. Mono Mohan, 3. Sri Aurobindo, 4. (One son died in childhood after him), Sarojini, 5. Barindra Kumar. They were two brothers : K. D. Ghose and Bama Charan Ghose who served at Bhagalpur as a head clerk. The two brothers did not agree with each other.

Birth-place of Sri Aurobindo
No. 12, Lower Circular Road, Calcutta
(Now: *Ranjani*)

2. CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION

1872. August 15. an hour before sunrise (at 4-30 A.M.) birth of Sri Aurobindo.
Place : Clalcutta, at the house of Barrister Mono Mohan Ghose. Theatre Road. Mrs. Mono Mohan's name was also Swarnalata. Dr. K. D. Ghose and Mono Mohan Ghose were very great friends and so were the Swarnalatas.

1872-1877

Sri Aurobindo's stay at Khulna: Dr. K.D.Ghose was serving there. Occasionally the family used to go to Deoghar to stay with the grand father, Rajnarayan Bose. Sri Aurobindo did not know Bengali for the first five years. There were a butler and a nurse in the house and he used to talk with them in broken English and similar Hindusthani. Dr. Rajnarayan Bose was a great patriot and was a great exponent of Indian Culture. But his views had no effect upon his son-in-law, Dr. K.D.Ghose, who had decided to give all his children a thoroughly European education.

An incident in childhood: Jogendra was Sri Aurobindo's eldest maternal uncle. He once held up a mirror to Sri Aurobindo and said "see, there is a monkey". After sometime Sri Aurobindo, the child, took the mirror to Jogendra, held up to him and said "great uncle, great monkey!" (*Baḍo māmā, baḍo bānar*)

1877-1879

Dr. K.D.Ghose put all the three sons in Loretto Convent School at Darjeeling which was mainly intended for children of European officials in India. Sri Aurobindo's age then was five. Thus very early he got accustomed to stay away from family and home-life. The children used to go to Khulna during vacations

and they also visited their grandfather's place Deoghar. Very little information is available about the two years Sri Aurobindo spent at Darjeeling. He remembered the roads with golden ferns, and also one or two minor incidents. One was this:—There was a long dormitory where childrren used to sleep. Mono Mohan usually slept near the door. One night some one was late and knocked at the door requesting him to open it. Mono Mohan replies "I can't, I am sleeping"!! Another incident happened at Deoghar where Sri Aurobindo had gone during vacation. One night all the children were walking with their grandfather, Rajnarayan Bose. After some time they all found that he was not with them. They walked back and saw that he was sleeping in standing position!

Your question reminds me of the story of my grand mother. She said: God has made such a bad world! If I could meet him I would tell him what I think of him!"

My grandfather said: "Yes, it is true; but God has so arranged that you can't get near him so long you have any such desire in you"!

22-1-1939

Swarnalata's mental condition was not normal during these two years. One day she was in a fit of anger and was screaming and beating Mono Mohan mercilessly. Sri Aurobindo who was present got afraid and making an excuse that he was thirsty he went out of the room.

A dream at Darjeeling that he remembered:—"I was lying down one day when I saw suddenly a great darkness rushing into me and enveloping me and the whole universe. After that I had a great Tamas always hanging on to me all along my stay in England. I believe that darkness had something to do with Tamas that came upon me. It left me only when I was coming back to India.

"Everyone makes the forefathers of a great man very religious-minded, pious etc. It is not true in my case at any rate. My father was a tremendous atheist".

10-3-1943

1879

Travel to England: Dr. K.D.Ghose, age thirtyfour, Swarnalata, age 27. and all the four children: 1. Benoy Bhushan, 2. Mono Mohan, 3. Sri Aurobindo, 4. Sarojini.

1879

Dr. K.D.Ghose returned alone from England to join his service at Khulna. He left Swarnalata and the children in England.

1880

Swarnalata returned to India with Barin and Sarojini, the former was born in England, Croydon, London. His name in the birth register was "Emmanuel Ghose" ! Dr. K. D. Ghose was staying alone at Khulna after his return and when Swarnalata came he arranged for her stay at Rohini two miles from Deoghar, with Barin and Sarojini because he found it impossible to stay with her as her mental condition had deteriorated and she was fast developing signs of madness. He sent regular remittances to his three sons during the first years. But afterwards they became more and more irregular and when the three brothers went to stay in London they entirely ceased.

Very little is known about the span of nearly 14 years. (1879-to 1892) is Sri Aurobindo's early life in England which yet seems to have been the most formative in his cultural make-up and intellectual equipment. What little is known is mainly from himself and what I have been able to gather from talks with him and others. My visit to England was fruitful in my obtaining some authentic materials of his external life. Yet we do not know, and, I am afraid, we shall never be able to know, so much even about the outward life. How he lived with the Drewetts at Manchester is practically impossible to know.

In fact, what we know is very little, only some unimportant details in the life of a versatile student who became a great seer in his later life. But it is better to know something authentic rather than leave it to vague conjecture.

His life in England falls into four distinct periods :

First : At Manchester, from 1879 to 1884 September.
Second : At London, from 1884 Sept. to 1890 July.
Third : At Cambridge, from October 1890 to 1892 October.
Fourth : At London, from 1892 October to 1892 December.

In between during vacations he used to go outside London and Cambridge whenever economic conditions permitted it.

In 1879 Dr. K. D. Ghose, aged 34, and Swarnalata, Mrs. Ghose, 27, and all the four children—Binoy Bhushan, Mono Mohan, Sri Aurobindo and daughter Sarojini sailed for England as Dr. Ghose serving in the C.M.S. was entitled to long leave to visit England. His intention was to leave his three sons,—the youngest Sri Aurobindo then seven years of age—, in England for education. After taking his medical degree at the Calcutta University, Dr. K. D. Ghose, had been to England in 1869 for further studies in medicine. He returned to India in 1871 with the degree, in all outward manner completely Anglicised and an atheist in his belief. He believed, like many educated Indians in those days, that the Englishman's was an ideal character.

Even while the children grew up in India Dr. K. D. Ghose took care to employ an English nurse, Miss Pagett, so as to accustom them to the English language and manners. Sri Aurobindo and his elder brother Mono Mohan did not know their mother tongue Bengali and spoke broken English and similar Hindustani in their infancy at Khulna.

As Dr. K. D. Ghose had decided to give his children a thoroughly European education, he put all his three sons in Loretto Convent School at Darjeeling which was almost exclusively intended for the children of European officials in India. Sri Aurobindo was five years old in 1877 when he joined the school and remained there till 1879 when Dr. K. D. Ghose undertook the voyage to England with his wife and all the children. Barindra Kumar Ghose, the fourth brother, was born at Croydon, London, on the 5th of January 1880. His name then was Emanuel.

Dr. K. D. Ghose was very friendly with Mr. Glazier,[1] a magistrate at Rangpur, when he decided to keep his three sons in England

[1] *India Office Libarry*

Manchester House

No. 84 Shakespeare Street

for studies, it was with Rev. William H. Drewett, a cousin of Mr. Glazier, who lived at Manchester that he arranged to leave them. This Rev. William H. Drewett was a congregational priest of the Stockport Road Church—now known as the Octagonal Church. He lived at 84, Shakespeare Street, near the Church. The two brothers, older than Sri Aurobindo, were of school-going age and so they joined the Grammar School at Manchester while Sri Aurobindo who was only seven, and probably considered too young to attend a school, was not sent to any school but was taught at home by the Drewetts, husband and wife. Mr. Drewett was an accomplished Latin scholar and he taught English and Latin in which he grounded Sri Aurobindo very well. Mrs. Drewett taught him history, geography, arithmetic and French. As he was studying at home he got plenty of time to read books according to his own taste. He read the Bible, Shakespeare, Shelley, Keats among other writers. He was not only reading poetry but writing verses for the Fox Family Magazine even at that early age. It seems he did not play any games, at least not such as to remember it. Only once he remembered to have played cricket without much success.

During their stay in England all the three brothers had practically no contact with anybody outside as Dr. K. D. Ghose had given strict instructions to Mr. Drewett not to allow his sons to mix with Indians or to know anything about the Indian way of life. The only other people they knew at Manchester were the Bantleys who occasionally used to visit the Drewetts from York and a sister of Mr. Drewett's who used to come to see him. These visits were returned.

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24 October 1956

Edward George Glazier, Bengal Civil Service.

Arrived in India on 25 September 1861. Her served in various grades of Magistrate and Collector at Rangpur from 1 September 1867 to April 1870, when he went on furlough (12 April 1870-15 November 1871); and again from 12 December 1871 to March 1877, when he again went on furlough (21 March-15 November 1877). On his return he was posted to Dinajpur as Magistrate and Collector 11 December 1877.

(*Bengal History of Services*, 1886)

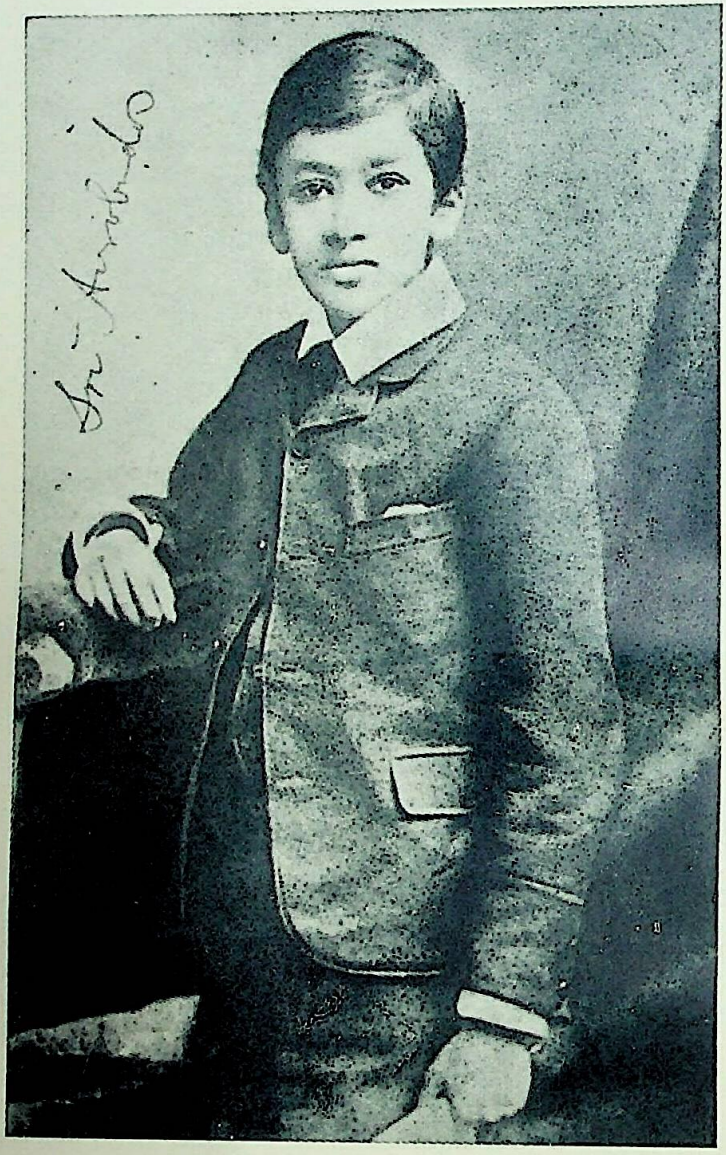
Mr. Drewett's mother was a devout Christian and she wished to convert the children of Dr. K. D. Ghose to Christianity,—to save their souls. But Mr. Drewett never consented to her wish and once when he asked Dr. Ghose about the religious life of the children his reply was to wait till the boys attained the age of discretion when they could choose their own religion.

A false rumour was once current that Sri Aurobindo was converted to Christianity probably due to his name being registered at St. Paul's and even at Cambridge, as "Aravinda Acroyd Ghose." But it is not true. He himself described what happened: "The only thing that happened was that there was once a meeting of non-conformist priests at Cumberland when we were in England. The old lady in whose house we dwelt, i.e. old Mrs. Drewett, took me there. After the prayers were over all dispersed and devout people remained a little longer afterwards and it was at that time that conversions were made. I was feeling completely bored. Then a priest approached me and put me some questions. I did not give any reply. Then they all shouted "he is saved, he is saved", and began to pray for me and offer thanks to God. I did not know anything. Then the priest came to me and asked me to pray. I was not in the habit of praying. But somehow I did it in the manner in which children recite their prayers before going to sleep in order to keep up an appearance. That was the only thing that happened. I was not used to attend the Church. I was about ten at that time." He felt infinitely relieved when he reached Manchester.

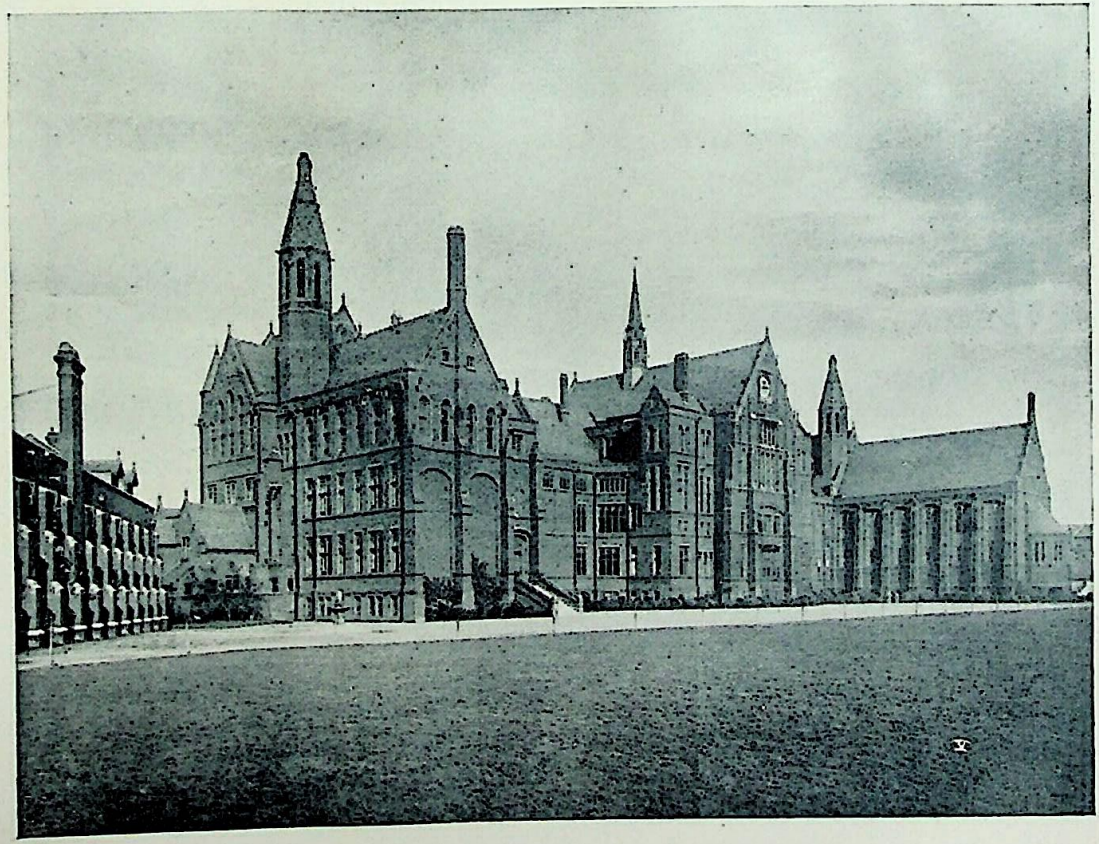
The Rev. W. H. Drewett was in charge of the pastorage in 1879[1] but in 1881 he resigned his living on account of differences with the deacons.[2] He is mentioned in the Church register in 1882

[1] Rev. William H. Drewett was trained at Didsbury College (for priests) and he passed in 1865 and in all probability was ordained at Manchester in 1871 as a priest.

[2] "The Rev. W.H. Drewett after the ministry of nearly ten years has resigned the pastorage of the Stockport Road Congregation Church in this city. The cause of this step, the Rev. gentleman explained, at the close of the service last evening, was his disagreement with a resolution of the deacon's court with regard to the erection of a new infant school-room and beautifying of the present school Church. The fulfilment of the original scheme, by which a Church was to be built on land secured for the purpose,



Sri Aurobindo
(*at the age of eleven*)



St. Paul's School, London

as staying in Manchester but "without pastoral charge". So that he was in Manchester upto 1882, but later on before 1884 he seems to have emigrated to Australia leaving the three Ghose brothers in charge of one Mr. Acroyd and of his old mother.

The question why Sri Aurobindo was called Arabinda Akroyd baffled me for sometime, till an indication in Mon. Monod Herzen's book gave me the clue.

It is now established[1] that Miss Annette Akroyd arrived in Calcutta in December 1872—the year in which Sri Aurobindo was born in Mono Mohan Ghose's house in Calcutta. As Miss Akroyd was present at Christening ceremony of the child Dr. K. D. Ghose who was very fond of the English way of life wanted the child to be given an English name. Miss Akroyd's father's name was probably given as godfather.

Dr. K. D. Ghose used to send £ 360 per year for the maintenance of his three sons at Manchester. But even during the first six years of their stay in England Dr. Ghose was unable to send regular remittances to Mr. Drewett and so the latter on his way to Australia passed through Calcutta and collected the dues from Dr. Ghose.

Who took Sri Aurobindo and Mono Mohan to St. Paul's School in London is not known. And yet in the same register Mono Mohan, who was admitted in the same month—September 1884—is mentioned as a "Ward of W. H. Drewett". The address given is 49, St. Stephen's Avenue, Uxbridge Road, Shepherd's Bush. Sri Aurobindo used to say that Mrs. Drewett, the mother of W. H. Drewett, had taken lodgings for them in London.

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fronting stockport Road, will be indefinitely postponed if the deacon's resolution is carried out." —*Manchester Guardian,* Monday, March 21, 1881.

[1] India Office Library 24 October 1956.

The following information has been gathered from Lord Beveridge's book about his parents entitled 'India called them':—
Henry Beveridge married Miss Annette Susannah Akroyd on April 6th 1875. Miss Akroyd was a daughter of William Akroyd, of Stourgridge, Worcestershire, where she was born on 13th December 1842. She arrived in Calcutta in December 1872 and was 'met by her Indian friends, Mr and Mrs. *Manomohun Ghose* and Mr. Gupta, and went to live with the former.' (She had met them in England).

II

St Paul's school, South Kensington, London, 1884 *to* 1889 *December*

Sri Aurobindo was elected to St. Paul's after being examined by Dr. Walker, who was satisfied with his proficiency in Latin and other subjects, but found him weak in Greek. He took personal interest in him and coached him in the common class, as was his rule, to gather all young and promising students. It is well known that Dr. Walker did not take any regular classes, but used to hold "tugs" i.e. a common class where he could coach each student in the subject in which he was weak. It is also equally known that Dr. Walker had an eye for the clever student and never lost sight of him once he knew him.

Sri Aurobindo's period at St. Paul's from 1884 to 1889 is full of activity during which he mastered the classics and secured the Butterworth Prize in Literature and the Bedford Prize in history. As already mentioned he was coached in Greek by Dr. Walker and pushed up rapidly to higher forms, for the High Master wanted to put the student into the form in which his powers might have full scope. That saved some years for Sri Aurobindo. He used to take an active part in the Literary Society at St. Paul's. On Nov. 5th 1889, it is recorded that he participated with distinction in a debate on "The inconsistency of Swift's political views". On Nov. 19th 1889, he participated in a debate on "Milton".[1]

In 1873 Miss Akroyd formed a school for Indian ladies—the Hindu Mahila Bidyalaya—on November 18th 1873 at 22 Baniapookur Lane, with some dozen pupils.

Henry Beveridge, Bengal Civil Service.

Arrived in India on 20 January 1858. On the 1st of December 1876 he was appointed Officiating District and Sessions Judge at Rangpur and remained there until he was appointed Officiating District and Sessions Judge at Patrea on 22 November 1879. He had previously served as Magistrate and Collector at Backergunge until 1874 when he was appointed on 2nd October 1874 District and Sessions Judge, Backergunge. He was granted furlough from 2 January 1875 to 28 October 1876.

(*Bengal History of Services,* 1886)

[1] Pauline Vol. VII & VIII, P. 52

FOUNDATIONERS.

Elected September, 1884.

Ashworth, Sidney Herbert (Feb. 23, 1872), son of H. H., accountant, Crowhurst, Worsley Road, Hampstead.

Left in Math. VIII., December, 1889. Matriculation, London Univ., First Class, June, 1888.

Bailey, Cyril (April 13, 1871), son of A., barrister, 88, Holland Road, Kensington.

Left in U. VIII., July, 1890. Captain, 1888–1890; Exhibitioner, 1890; Bedford Prize, 1887, Thruston, 1889; Kynaston, 1889; Ollivant, 1889 and 1890; Sleath, 1890; Exhibitioner of Balliol Coll., Oxford, 1888; Scholar, 1889; Hertford Scholar, 1891; Craven Scholar, 1891; First Class Classics Moderations, 1892; B.A., First Class Litt. Hum., 1894; Fellow of Exeter Coll., 1894; M.A. (Exeter), 1896; Governor of St. Paul's School, 1901; Fellow and Tutor, Balliol Coll., Oxford, 1902.

First XI., 1890.

Bevan, Stuart James (Mar. 31, 1872), son of W. J., oil and seed merchant, 50, Elm Park Gardens, South Kensington.

Transferred to Capitation Scholars, April, 1888. Left in Further Math., July, 1888. Trinity College, Cambridge; Third Class, Law Tripos, Part I., 1893; B.A. and LL.B., 1894; Lieutenant, 3rd Batt., Duke of Cornwall's Regt., 1890; Captain, 1896; Called to the Bar (Midd. Temple), 1895.

Emanuel, Alfred Edward Lewis (June 15, 1873), son of L., solicitor, 91, Gloucester Terrace, Hyde Park.

Left in U. VIII (Exhibitioner), July, 1892. Kynaston Prize, 1891 and 1892; Butterworth, 1891, Montagu, 1891; Scholar of Trinity Coll., Oxford, 1891; First Class Classics Moderations, 1894, Second Class Litt. Hum., 1896; B.A. 1896; M.A. 1901, Indian Civil Service, 1896; Assistant Magistrate and Collector (Bombay).

President of S. P. S. Union, 1891-2; Captain of Middle side (Football).

Ford, Ernest (Oct. 19, 1870), son of E., retired merchant, 69, Oxford Gardens, Notting Hill.

Left in M. VIII., July, 1888. Peterhouse, Cambridge, 1888; Admission, Indian Civil Service, 1888; Second Class Moral Science Tripos, 1890; Appointment, I. C. S., 1890; Assistant Commissioner, Burma.

Ghose, Aravinda Ackroyd (Aug. 15, 1872), son of B., 49, St. Stephen's Avenue, Shepherd's Bush.

Left in I. C. S. Class, July, 1890. Butterworth (2nd Prize), 1889; Scholar of King's Coll., Camb., 1890; First Class (Division III.), Classical Tripos, Part I., 1892; Rawley Prize for Greek Iambics, 1892; Indian Civil Service Admission (11th place), July, 1890; Appointment, July, 1892.

Harden, Philip Graham (Aug. 28, 1872), son of M., Inspector of Schools, 14, Melrose Terrace, Melrose Gardens, West Kensington Park.

Left in VII., July, 1888. Died August 5, 1888, aged 16.

Sri Aurobindo's Record — St. Paul's School

It appears quite certain that the three brothers were compelled to live in a very embarrassed position in London because remittances from their father at first became irregular and then ultimately almost stopped. This is borne out by many references in Mono Mohan's contemporary letters to Laurence Binyon as also by what Sri Aurobindo states in his memorial to the Secretary of State for India for being given another chance to appear for the riding test in the I.C.S. in 1892.

He states "I was sent over to England when seven years of age with my two brothers and for the last eight years we have been thrown on our own resources, without any English friend to help or advise us. Our father, Dr. K. D. Ghose of Khulna, has been unable to provide the three of us with sufficient for the most necessary wants and we have long been in an embarassed position." (Nov. 1892).

Mono Mohan's letters to Laurence Binyon support this statement with a wealth of detail. In a letter, July 1887, from 49, St. Stephen's Avenue, he writes :

"My position by the way is very hazy just now; I do not know whether after all I shall be able to arrange my scholarship because my father is in some financial straits and he cannot help me; 80 will not be enough to keep me at Oxford....I am going to Oxford next week to find out if I can help myself in any way, or find help....I shall try to persuade my father to let me stay in England for good; I am sure with the tastes I have I shall be of no use in India."

A letter from Mono Mohan dated July 28—probably of 1887 from 49, St. Stephen's Avenue recounts a story of Dr. Ghose which is worth quoting. The reference is to a piece of news in the Daily News of London. The letter is addressed to Laurence Binyon :

"As for the piece in the Daily News about me, it was stuck in simply because it is a radical paper. We have no family relation with Lal Mohan Ghose whatever, but his brother who bears the same name as myself is a great friend of my father's. All the Ghoses came originally from the Panjab on the Afghan border. The word means fame and they were a tribe of the proud warrior caste. But

our family has sadly come down; the family house or palace, a very noble building, I believe not far from Calcutta, is quite in ruins. My father when a boy was very poor, living almost entirely by charity of friends; and it is only through his almost superhuman perseverance that we have to some degree retrieved ourselves. You may be sure I shall try all I can to get to Oxford but I am in a rather strained position. My father wants me to go out to India and slave as a barrister, and become a great man of the world like himself—a thing which is quite distasteful to my nature. He is just now in difficulties and if he finds he can help me at the University he may consent to my staying in England and trying for some Civil Service appointment like those in the British Museum, just to earn some money....But he is almost sure to want me to try the University."

The difficulty which Mono Mohan states was common to the three brothers. There was only a slight modification in Sri Aurobindo's case as he got scholarship from St. Paul's to join King's College, Cambridge, and also the stipend for the I.C.S. probationership. Even so, he was always hard up, particularly because he used to help his two brothers whenever he could.

From Mono Mohan to Laurence Binyon, Hastings, Sussex, 1887 :

"I have just a letter from my father and I wanted to tell you the joyful news that he has willingly consented to my staying in England and working at literature since it is so in my line. He also says that he would like me to go to Oxford, but his means are not sufficient to keep me there long but he may be able (he will write soon and tell me his decision) to keep me there a little while as he says "to have still greater chances of acquiring literary tastes, make friends among those who are aspirants in the same field", so he is going to try his best to give me a year or two at Oxford. As to a British Museum appointment he would not mind my taking it at all, though he does think there are objections to it." However he says, "I am ready that you should take your chance and depend upon your own enterprise in the literary world. But you must not give up the scholarship in the prospect of getting an appointment. You have

to pass in Sanskrit and you must learn that. So I will try my best to give you a year or two at the University where you can learn Sanskrit and improve your classics, get facility in writing and speaking and make interests and form friends. When you have done that it will be easier for you not only to get an appointment in the Museum but to ensure a rapidity in your promotion to a higher appointment. So you see I have no objection to this, provided you can be sure of getting steady promotion. Perhaps if you can do that and have a home for your brother and sister in London they will have excellent facilities for education." I have given this in my father's own words as you will be able to understand the position better. Perhaps you did not know that I have a little sister (she is about 11 years old now) and a brother, 8 years old, in India at present. My father's character may well be called "thorough". He is determined to give them a good education, though he is toiling under difficulties. He must be a man of iron nerves. I could not tell you half the things he has suffered, but he is bent to go on. Indeed he says "my body is as stern as my mind to have survived all the trouble which I have endured." I cannot but be proud with admiration at the sight of such dauntless self-sacrifice and heroic perseverance.

"Tell me, what did you think of these prospects ? You see my aim is also to gratify my father in one project, try my best to make a home for my sister and brother as he suggests (after I have been at Oxford) for I know their education is closest to his heart though he does not say so much about it. At the same time I want to get myself off his hands and lessen his burden".

This letter is important because it makes a useful addition to the very scanty material available about the relation between Dr. Ghose and his sons. Even in 1887 the financial condition was strained.

In another letter to Laurence Binyon Mono Mohan, when he was dunned by Zacharias & Co., refers to his father. "I am growing as stern as my father who is so strangely unsentimental that I am assured he would vivisect me if he thought that my highest good".

Apart from Mono Mohan's letters there are other evidences to throw light on their strained condition under which all the three

brothers had to carry on their studies in England : one is a letter written to James Cotton by G. W. Prothero, a tutor and senior Fellow of King's College, on hearing about Sri Aurobindo's rejection from the I.C.S. on the ground of his non-appearance for the riding test. It is a letter worthy of a university man vindicating the values of culture and learning against the lifeless red-tapism of a department. He says : "His pecuniary circumstances prevented him from resigning his scholarship (classical) when he became a selected candidate. ...He performed his part of the bargain, as regards the college, most honourably and took high place in the first class of the classical Tripos. He also obtained certain college prizes showing competence in English and literary ability."...

"Moreover, the man has not only ability but character. He has had a very hard and anxious time of it for the last two years. Supplies from home have almost entirely failed, and he has had to keep his two brothers as well as himself, and yet his courage and perseverance have never failed. I have several times written to his father on his behalf, but for the most part unsuccessfully. It is only lately that I managed to extract from him enough to pay some tradesmen who would otherwise have put his son into the County Court. I am quite sure that these pecuniary difficulties were not due to any extravagance on Ghose's part. His whole way of life which was simple and penurious in the extreme is against this.... I can fully believe that his incapability to keep an appointment at Woolwich was due to the want of cash."—Nov. 20, 1892.

In a letter to Sir Macpherson, James S. Cotton writes :

"It happens that I have known Mr. A. A. Ghose and his two brothers for the past five years and that I have been a witness of the pitiable straits to which they have all three been reduced through failure of their father, a Civil Servant in Bengal, and, I believe, a most respectable man, to supply them with adequate resources. In addition they have lived an isolated life without any Englishmen to take care of them or advise them."

Though these letters were expressly written for influencing the I.C.S. Commissioners yet they throw sufficient light on the embar-

rassing economic pressure under which the three brothers lived for almost eight years.

When Sri Aurobindo, Mono Mohan and Binoy Bhushan came to stay in London, Old Mrs. Drewett took lodgings for them at 49, Stephen's Avenue, Shepard's Bush, and stayed with them. During six years stay in London Sri Aurobindo lived at three or four different places. They were at 49, St. Stephen's Avenue from Sep. 1884 to July 1887. Then they went to Hastings for a holiday and on their return moved to 128, Cromwell Road, which was the office of the South Kensington Liberal-club. It was James Cotton who helped the three Indian students. They stayed at this place from Sep. 1887 to April 1889. From April 1889 to the end of the year they moved to 28, Kempsford Garden's, Earl's Court, South Kensington. From 1890 to Oct. 1892 Sri Aurobindo went to Cambridge. After Oct. 1892 Sri Aurobindo stayed at 6, Burtington Road, Bayswater, upto Dec. 1892. This place is now known as 68, St. Stephen's Gardens.

An incident reported by Sri Aurobindo gives us the reason for changing his residence from 49, St. Stephen's Avenue to 128, Cromwell Road. Old Mrs. Drewett was a pious Christian and every day there used to be family prayers in the chapel and passages from the Bible were read. The three brothers had to participate in it and sometimes the eldest brother used to conduct the worship. One day at prayer time Mono Mohan was in an insolent mood and he said that old Moses was well served when the people disobeyed him. This enraged the old lady beyond measure and she said she would not live under the same roof with heretics as it may fall down and she went to live somewhere else. Sri Aurobindo says : "We felt relieved and I felt infinitely grateful to Dada. Her son never used to meddle in these affairs because he was a man of strong common sense. But he was away in Australia. In those days I was not particular about telling truth and I was a great coward. Nobody could have imagined that later on I could face the gallows or carry on revolutionary movement. In my case it was all human imperfection with which I had to start, feel all the difficulties before embodying the Divine Consciousness".

The house 49, St. Stephen's Avenue, was abandoned and Sri Aurobindo and Binoy Bhushan moved most probably in Sept.

or Aug. 1887 to the rooms at the top of the building where the office of the South Kensington Liberal Club was situated at 128, Cromwell Road; they seem to have stayed there till April 1889.

Mono Mohan found a lady who gave him lodging and also credit.

This was perhaps the most trying period of Sri Aurobindo's stay in England. They were all so hard pressed that Binoy Bhushan had to accept being an assistant to James S.Cotton, who was Secretary to the Club, on five shillings a week. The help rendered by James S.Cotton to these three brothers in their difficulty is an unforgettable obligation. During this period Sri Aurobindo used to get a piece of bacon, tea and bread in the morning and some pastry or saveloy sandwiches for a penny and a cup of tea in the afternoon. For nearly two years he had to go practically without dinner at that young age. There was no overcoat to protect him from the rigours of the London winter and there was no heating arrangement or fire in the office where he slept. There was hardly what might be called bedroom in the office.

The description of this place from one of Mono Mohan's letters without date might be interesting:—"I write to tell you my new address to which we have just moved from St. Stephen's Avenue. I will show it to you some day. It is very different from the old place, but I dare say my brothers will get accustomed to it in time. Of course, I (probably) will go to Oxford in a month's time. There is confounded railway behind but as the trains go more gently than I have right to expect I can put up with that. There is here a reading room, a Club room where members meet and lectures are heard, and I don't know what not....This place you must remember is off Gloucester Road which is of course opposite the Broad Walk in Kensington Gardens."

Some time after April 1889 Sri Aurobindo moved to private lodgings at 28, Kempsford Gardens, Earl's Court, South Kensington, and remained there till he went to Cambridge.

In a letter of 1890, Mono Mohan describes this house: "Kempsford Gardens, I must tell you, looks out upon Brompton Cemetery and funerals pass down it every day".

"The Revolt of Islam" was a great favourite with me even when I was quite young and I used to read it again and again, of

course, without understanding everything. But evidently it appealed to some part of the being. There was no other effect of reading it except this that I had a thought that I would dedicate my life to a similar world change and take part in it."

(28*th June* 1926)

Both at Manchester and at St. Paul's Sri Aurobindo gave his attention to the study of classics, but even at St. Paul's in the last three years he simply went through his school course without labouring over it and spent most of his time in general reading, especially English poetry, literature, fiction, French literature and history of mediaeval and modern Europe. He spent some time over learning Italian, some German and a little Spanish. This he could do as he was at ease in his school studies. Though some of his teachers used to regret his preoccupation with general reading he was able to win many prizes and secured an open scholarship to King's College in his final examination at St. Paul's. He had with him for many years an illustrated edition of the Arabian Nights which he had himself selected as a prize.

Sri Aurobindo began writing poetry from a very early age. Even while he was at Manchester he wrote verses for the Fox Family Magazine, "An awful imitation" as he used to call it. But at St. Paul's between the age of sixteen and eighteen, he began to write English poetry, an activity which continued when he went to Cambridge, and indeed, all through his life. His brother, Mono Mohan, was a classmate of Laurence Binyon and a friend of Oscar Wilde. He was also very intimate with the Welsh poet, Stephen Phillips, and was himself a promising poet, having written poems which were published in the Prima Vers a collection from Oxford. It is likely that apart from his own classical studies and poetical bent Mono Mohan's influence stimulated Sri Aurobindo to read the classical poets. At the age of seventeen he translated from Greek a passage titling it "Hecuba". Lawrence Binyon who happened to read it asked Sri Aurobindo why he was not writing more poetry. Occasionally he used to write Greek and Latin verses.

During those days games did not form an important item of school-life as it does today. Football and cricket were just being

introduced. It was Shepard, one of the masters who made the games popular at St. Paul's. Dr. Walker, the High Master, was rather indifferent to sports in the beginning.

It is now known for certain that the three brothers used to go out of London on vacations whenever they could afford it. In Aug. 1886 they had gone to Keswick.

There are three letters of Mono Mohan describing their visit to Keswick which must have lasted for at least three weeks. The first letter is dated 10th Aug. and the last 23rd Aug. In the last he writes about remaining one week more—which means till the end of August 1886

I

C/o Miss Scott
Ambleside Road
Keswick
1886 Aug. 10th, Tuesday.

"And Derbyshire, I can tell you from my own experience, is one of the loveliest counties in England, if you only go to the right part. I stayed one whole summer at Mallock Bank, and from there had a splendid walking tour. My brother, I and another gentleman took the train to Mansel Dale and walked from there into Castle-toro-Valley, slept at a very comfortable inn there, and next morning walked over Kinder Scout and into Hayfield and Chapel on the Frith from where we took the train back".

II

C/o Miss Scott
Ambleside Rd.
Keswick
1886 Friday Aug. 13

"You see we have changed our address, but it is only a few doors off our old place in Eskin Street—however we are only

thinking of staying here till next Tuesday and then going off to the sea side to St. Bees, where we went last year; for we have had great trouble in getting lodgings in Keswick".

II

"We have been having very rainy and unsettled weather of late—that is the worst of the Lake District—when the weather once becomes unsettled, there is no telling when it will be fine again. I have seen Borrowdale, the Honister Pass, Butter-mere, Newland's vale, and a little while ago I and my younger brother went together to Thirlmere, with Helvellyn looming up on one side all the way, but we did not see the lake which is a very pretty one—for, being a bleak, misty day, it came on to rain when we were a mile from it and we had to turn back."

III

Keswick
Mon. Aug. 23, 1886
Miss Scott's
Ambleside Rd.

"All last week was so much taken up with walks, that I really had no time to sit down and write even a few lines to you. On Friday we went all three of us with a gentleman to Thirlmere, upto the middle of it along the Western side which is wooded with firs. Thirlmere is a lovely lake, and wonderfully placid and calm lying between Helvellyn on the east and a high range of fells on the west, and its banks all round the brink are beautifully wooded, the trees going some distance up the hill sides. Helvellyn that day was shrouded in a white mist and could not very well be seen. We crossed the lake in the middle by the bridges, and came back by the beautiful vale of St. John and a path round Naddle Fell, getting home at 6 P.M. and eating a tremendous tea (the four of us getting through two considerable loaves).

"On Saturday we went to Waterlath which is certainly the loveliest place I have yet seen in the Lake District. It was a very fine day, and the whole party of us started at 9.40. We had two ladies, and of course not much walking could be done. They went with my eldest brother for an escort by coach through Barrowdale to Rosthwaite, and then walked over the fell towards Walendlath. My younger brother, myself, and the same gentleman walked along Lake Derwentwater and then up the Barrow woods, a steep hill climb into Watendlath. The scenery in these woods is quite Alpine (with only the absence of snow) being a sheer rock at one place, densely wooded, top to bottom rising one thousand feet from the Barrowdale Valley.

In a pool here I had a splendid dip, only the current was very strong, and the water in some parts quite deep enough to drown me. We all met at a hill above Watendlath had tea at a farm house and returned very leisurely by the Barrow woods, reaching home at 10 P.M.

"Today has turned out very fine and we intend to have a walk somewhere, though I don't know where as yet".

"We are not going to stay at Keswick much longer, most likely till the end of this week. We shall be all broken up—my eldest brother will go to London to coach for an exam., and we two to some place on the coast most likely not to St. Bees."

In the first letter he writes about "his own experience" of Derbyshire, which means he must have visited it before 1886 in all probability with his two brothers.

In the second letter (dated 13th Aug. 1886) he writes: "we are thinking of staying here till next Tuesday and then going off to the sea-side to St. Bees, "Where we went last year". So, in 1885 the three brothers had gone to St. Bees. In the same letter he refers to Sri Aurobindo; "And a little while ago I and my younger brother went together to Thirlmere".

The third letter (dated 23rd Aug. 1886) gives a vivid and detailed description of a two days programme which they had at Keswick.

"On Friday we went all three of us" to Thirlmere; evidently a second walk to it. He also hints that "we two", meaning himself and Sri Aurobindo—would be going to some place on the coast,"

There are two other letters of Mono Mohan—both written in July 1887—in which he discusses with Binyon the prospect of a visit outside London.

49, St. Stephen's Avenue
July 1887

"I believe my brother has already written; but we shall not be able to leave London till the end of the next week at the earliest."

49, St. Stephen's Avenue
July 28th 1887

"I am sorry to say that the place you recommended at St. Leonard's was full; we have written to the one at Hastings...but we have not yet received a reply".

Almost immediately after this letter they must have received a reply from Hastings as there are four letters from Mono Mohan to Binyon from the new address.

Binyon evidently went to Keswick in 1887 July. In the letter dated 28th July...there is reference to it:

"Your description of Grisidale walk I appreciated very much. It is one of the places I did not go to: but my brothers went, and they at once remembered, when I told them, of the wrong way up which you describe, only they came down that way instead of going up"...

The three brothers went to Hastings on the 2nd of August, 1887 and stayed there for about a month. Four letters of Mono Mohan to Binyon from Hastings throw much light on the relation between Dr. K.D. Ghose and his sons and evidently, also between the three brothers. These letters contain very little description of the place.

(1) 2 Plynlimmon Terrace,
Aug. 8th Monday, (1887) Hastings.

"We came here last Tuesday, all right, only by a dreadfully slow train"....I like Hastings very much—it is delightful on this

cliff especially where we are staying. But I confess the sea is better than the land....I have seen Eceles bourne and Fairlight which are pretty.

(2) 2 Plynlimmon Terrace
Hastings 1887

"We are going to stay at Hastings a little more than a week from today. I should like to go home earlier, but money has to come from my father, before we can pay our rent here. So we stay a little longer."

It is in the last two letters that Mono Mohan writes about Dr. K.D.Ghose's inability to keep him long at Oxford.

On their return from Hastings the three brothers changed their lodgings. Mono Mohan's letter mentions this fact:

South Kensington Liberal Club
128 Cromwell Road, Monday.

"I write to tell you my new address to which we have just now moved from St. Stephen's Avenue. I will show it to you some day. It is very different from the old place—but I daresay my brothers will get accustomed to it in time. Of course, I (probably) will go to Oxford in a month's time"...[1]

"This place, you must remember, is off the Gloucester Road which is of course opposite the Broad walk in Kensington Gardens".

It appears from Mono Mohan's letter from Christ Church College, in May, 1888 that Sri Aurobindo went to Galway for holidays, "my brother is probably going to Galway for his holidays on the invitation of a friend we have met in the club".

[1] They must have moved to this house in Sep. 1887. Monomohan's letter from Oxford proves it:

Ch—ch (Christ church.)
Oxford, Octo. 1887

"We started from Paddington, my brother and myself, at, I think it was, 10 A.M.".

During the last two years of study at St. Paul's Sri Aurobindo was admitted as a candidate for the I.C.S. He took up the classics and some other subjects but unlike other I.C.S. candidates he prepared the subjects himself without engaging a tutor. He could hardly afford it.

While he won an open scholarship for classics in his final examination at St. Paul's Sri Aurobindo also passed his test for selection for the I.C.S. standing 11th in rank and secured very high marks in classics. It may be noted that Binoy Bhushan also appeared for the test but did not succeed.

Sri Aurobindo obtained one of the open scholarships from St. Paul's with classics. It brought £ 80/- a year, a sum which is not sufficient to cover the expenses at Cambridge; but it was a great help to him. He was also getting a stipend for the I.C.S. probationership. Even so, he was always hard pressed because he used to help his brothers occasionally. It goes without saying that this double work of keeping up his studies in classics and I.C.S. preparation must have been a great strain upon him. Mr. G.M. Prothero in his letter to James S. Cotton writes about his studies :

"He performed his part of the bargain as regards the College most honourably and took a high place in the first class of the classical Tripos, part one, at the end of the second year of his residence. He also obtained certain College prizes, showing command of English and literary ability. That a man should have been able to do this (which alone is quite enough for most undergraduates) and at the same time to keep up his I.C.S. work, proves very unusual industry and capacity. Besides his classical scholarship he possessed a knowledge of English literature far beyond the average of undergraduates, and wrote a much better English than most young Englishmen".

November, 1892

Coming from one of the Senior Tutors of King's this unsolicited testimonial to Sri Aurobindo's literary capacity even as a student is a precious document among the very scanty material available of his life in England.

The same letter has been already quoted to show how Mr. Prothero had written to Dr. K.D.Ghose for money but without much success. It was only when a few tradesmen threatened to take legal action against Sri Aurobindo that Prothero "succeeded in extracting some money out of him." There was however a humorous sequel. After sending the money Dr. K. D. Ghose wrote an angry letter to Sri Aurobindo chiding him for being extravagant ! While relating this Sri Aurobindo used to laugh and say "there was no money to be extravagant about".

In spite of what to us appears as a want of sense of duty on the part of Dr. K.D.Ghose, it is surprising that neither Mano Mohan nor Sri Aurobindo seem to have any bitterness towards their father. On the contrary, every time they wrote or spoke of him it was with great admiration and pride.

And Dr. K.D.Ghose knew very well that Sri Aurobindo was making excellent progress by his own efforts. In his letter to Jogendra Bose, his brother-in-law (published in the Orient, 27 Feb. 1949) he writes about his sons :

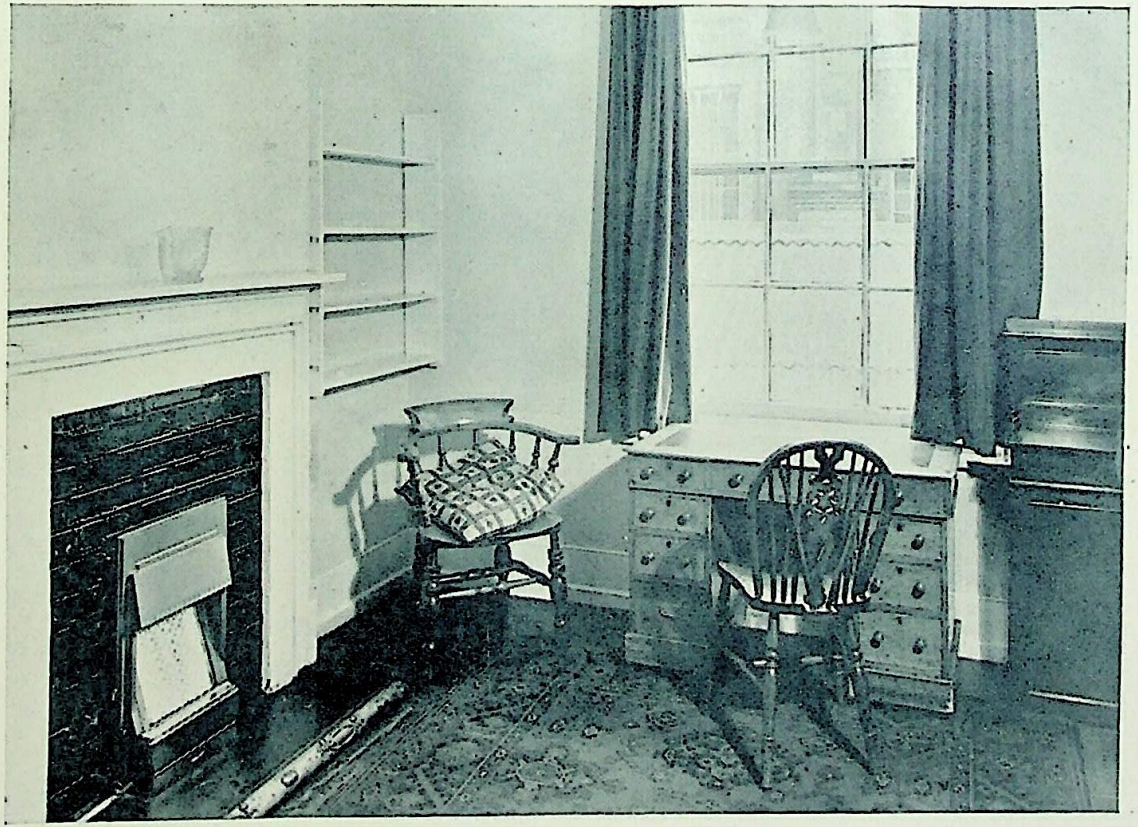
"The three sons I have produced I have made giants of them. I may not, but you will live to be proud of three nephews who will adorn your country and shed lustre on your name....Ara, I hope, will yet glorify his country by a brilliant administration. I shall not live to see it, but remember this letter if you do....He is at King's College, Cambridge, now borne there by his own ability."

Khulna, dated 2nd Dec. 1891

The evidence of Mr. Prothero and of K. D. Ghose is supported by a letter to his father from Sri Aurobindo himself in which "the great" O. B.'s (Oscar Browning's) remarks are quoted.

"Last night I was invited to coffee with one of the dons and in his room I met the great O. B. otherwise Oscar Browning, who is the feature "par excellence" of King's. He was extremely flattering and passing from subject of Cotillons to that of scholarship, he said to me :

"I suppose you know you passed an extraordinarily high examination. I have examined papers at thirteen examinations



Sri Aurobindo's Room, King's Lane

King's College, Cambridge

and I have never during that time seen such excellent papers as yours (meaning by classical papers, at the scholarship examination). As for your essay, it was wonderful. In this essay, (a comparison between Shakespeare and Milton), I indulged my oriental tastes to the top of their bent, it overflowed with rich and tropical imagery, it abounded in antitheses and epigrams and it expressed my real feelings without restraint or reservation. I thought myself that it was the best thing I have ever done, but at school it would have been condemned as extraordinarily Asiatic and bombastic. The great O.B. afterwards asked me where my rooms were and when I had answered he said "that wretched hole !" (and) then turning to Mahaffy "How rude we are to our scholars ! We get great minds to come down here and then shut them up in that box I suppose it is to keep their pride down."

2nd Dec. 1890

Sri Aurobindo passed the classical Tripos examination in the first division at the end of his second year at Cambridge. It is on passing this first part that the degree of B.A. is usually conferred. But the degree can be taken only in the third year as generally the students take three years to appear for it. Sri Aurobindo had only two years at his disposal and even before the third year he might have got the degree if he had applied for it. But he did not care to take it. A degree is useful in England if one wants to take up an educational or an academic career. Otherwise it is of little importance.

In 1891, the Irish leader Parnell died and Sri Aurobindo wrote a poem on him. He took intelligent interest in all public questions in those days and formed his own independent judgment and opinion about them.

It was during his stay at Cambridge that the "Indian Majlis", an association of Indian Students, was started. This Majlis played an important part in the social life of Indian students in England and very often moulded their political outlook. Sri Aurobindo took a leading part in it and was for sometime its secretary. He advocated the cause of Indian freedom in the "Majlis" in very strong language and it is very likely that reports of his revolutionary speeches might have reached the Indian Civil Service Commissioners at

Whitehall in London and that might have something to do with their final decision to reject him from the I.C.S.

A photograph of the room which Sri Aurobindo occupied as a scholar at King's is reproduced here. It is much changed as alterations have been made to it since 1890.

The three chief preoccupations of Sri Aurobindo at Cambridge were :

1. Studies, for the Tripos and the I.C.S. 2. Participation in the Indian Majlis, zeal for Indian Independence. 3. Writing poetry.

That he passed his Tripos in the first division has already been noted. He also won a prize for Greek and Latin Iambics. He also passed all terminal examinations of the I.C.S. though he does not seem to have cared to keep up his high rank in it. It may have been due to his inability to engage a tutor as was usual with I.C.S. candidates; but more likely it was due to his flagging interest in the I.C.S. career on account of his preoccupation with the idea of Indian Independence. In fact writing poetry and participating in the Indian Majlis were the two activities that interested him. Study, and success in examination was a necessity. Sri Aurobindo wrote poetry at Cambridge and most of the poems written there were published in "Songs to Myrtilla" published at Baroda in 1895.

It was Ferrers, who later practised as a barrister in the Strait Settlements, that gave to Sri Aurobindo, while at Cambridge, the clue to the discovery of quantitative metre i.e. hexameter—in English. He was pointing out a very Homeric line from Clough and his recitation of it gave Sri Aurobindo the real swing (or lilt) of the metre. This Norman Ferrers passed through Calcutta on his way to Singapore in 1908 when the political prosecution against Sri Aurobindo (Alipore Bomb case) was going on. He came to the High Court and was anxious to render help to Sri Aurobindo but did not know how to do so.

Among his contemporaries may be mentioned Mahaffy Robert Pentland, Hugh Normal Ferrers, Felx Xavier De Souza; K. G. Deshpande, Sir Harishingh Gaur.

K. G. Despande met Sri Aurobindo in Baroda where he was serving in the Revenue Department.

Being brought up in complete isolation—after their stay in Manchester with the Drewetts—in a foreign country without experience of home life in India or of family life in England, must have been a great trial for the three brothers.

Binoy Bhushan who was generous by temperament seems to have felt his responsibility more keenly than the other two brothers particularly in the beginning when remittances from India became irregular. It is evident that Sri Aurobindo had the same sense of responsibility. Mono Mohan, romantic and poetic, enamoured of England and English life, a little prone to luxury, felt very strongly the want of a family and parental love. In his correspondence one can clearly see that he was trying hard to stretch out his hands to some one so as to make good this loss. Sri Aurobindo, shy and reserved temperamentally but firm in his will and hard-working, does not express himself in the same emotional exuberance. It seems to me that the difficult circumstances steeled his will to face life with an inflexible resolution. We have seen before that Mono Mohan in one of his letters expresses his wish to have a home in England where he could bring his sister and brother for education. But it never came to anything. In fact Sri Aurobindo had to support his sister, Sarojini, at Bankipore after 1893, on his return to India when he joined the Baroda State Service. He used to send money regularly from Baroda to his mother at Rohini. Later on in 1901 Barin also came and stayed with him.

But what Mono Mohan describes as his great loss in his own childhood must have have been felt as a loss by all the three brothers.

Christ Church, Feb. 1888

"Whole childhood and boyhood is expansive. This human cry stretches passionately, forwards its young tendrils and the warm feelings are at the forefront yearning to bestow and to be reciprocated; it is all heart, its brain lies undeveloped. It is the wise forethought of nature that this should be so, but in my case Fate came between and cancelled her decrees, and what to others is the bright portion of their life, its heaven and refuge, was for me bitterly and hopelessly blighted. You will not understand me unless I tell a cir-

cumstance of my life which is unhappily both painful for me to reveal and for you to hear. I had no mother. She is insane. You judge the horror of this, how I strive to snatch a fearful love but only succeed in hating and loathing, and at last becoming cold. Crying for bread I was given a stone. My father was kind but stern, and I never saw much of him. Thus from childhood I was subject to fits of gloom and despondence which grew with my age....I only relate this, because I can't otherwise explain the peculiar melancholy which now partly compasses my character. Also, I believe there is something repulsive about me. Nobody ever took a liking to me, you are the only one who ever appreciated me. As a boy I often perceived with jealousy that my brothers were always preferred to me."

The quotation makes sad reading but it serves to bring into relief a part of the psychological background of the three brothers. It explains much of Dr. Ghose's irregularities of life including his inability to send money to his sons in England. He had to maintain a house where he was serving, and maintaining another for his insane wife at Rohini. Young Barin and Sarojini were to be sent to school. Add to this his generous and charitable temperament and one can understand why he was unable to meet the economic claims of his children's education.

It is definitely established that Sri Aurobindo left Cambridge in October 1892 and stayed in London, (6 Burlington Road), up to the end of December, when he embarked for India. He had passed his Tripos Part I, and also the I.C.S. examination. But he wanted to manipulate his non-selection for the I.C.S. as he told us afterwards at Pondicherry, and so absented himself from the riding test. He said in one of his communications he felt no call for the I.C.S. and was seeking some way to get himself disqualified without himself rejecting the service, which his family would not have allowed him to do.

The correspondence with the India Office concerning the riding test is published here, and the reader can see for himself the significance of the statement made by Sri Aurobindo.

The Riding Test for Sri Aurobindo's I.C.S. Examination

This correspondence relating to Sri Aurobindo's Riding Examination at the time of the I.C.S. selection is being published here for the first time. I am indebted to the India Office Library in London and particularly to Mr. S.C.Sutton, the Librarian, for the kindness and prompt help which he gave in securing this material.

Notes on the Correspondence

(Brief notes on the main items of the correspondence are given below followed by the correspondence itself. The numbers of the notes correspond to the numbers of the items of the correspondence.)

I

Letter dated 24th August, 1892

(From Mr. Lockhart, Secretary to the Civil Service Commissioners to the Under Secretary of State, India Office.)

Reports that "Messers. Maclver and A.A.Ghose have still to satisfy the Commissioners of their eligibility in respect of health and the latter gentleman has still to pass in Riding."

II

Letter dated 4th November, 1892

(From Mr. E.A. Collier, Senior Officer of the C.S.Commission to Mr. Trevor, Asst. Secretary, Judicial and Public Dept., India Office.)

It is a private note stating that Sri Aurobindo "has passed his medical examination and we expect to hear the result of his riding examination soon."

So, uptill 4th November, there is no sign that he would be rejected.

III

Letter dated 14th November, 1892

(From Mr. E. A. Collier to Mr. Trevor)

Says : "Mr. Ghose has given us a good deal of trouble and there are some points in his case as to which I must ask my colleague Howlett who is away now but will be here tomorrow."

So, between 4th November and 14th November, something happened which made Mr. Collier change his mind. It is also evident Mr. Trevor was trying to get Sri Aurobindo selected.

IV

Letter dated 16th November, 1892

(Memorandum by the Senior Examiner, Civil Service Commission, regarding the case of Mr. Aravinda A. Ghose.)

States the following points :

(a) Ordered to be examined on 9th August.

Did not attend. Sent medical certificate on August 11.

(b) On 15th August was asked when he would be ready to be examined.

No reply.

Question repeated on 30th August.

Question repeated a third time on 17th October.

(c) Answer dated 18th October—stating he would prefer 25th or 26th October. "Colonel Brough fixed 26th October at 12.30." "Ghose ordered by letter on 22nd October to attend at that time."

(d) "On 26th October, Colonel Brough wrote to say the candidate had not appeared. A messenger was sent to Ghose (same address) and asked to bring back an answer : Answer was that Ghose had not received the letter making appointment."

(e) Directed to attend here in person on Monday 31st October. "I gave him a letter asking him to present the letter in person."

On the 5th November, Colonel Brough wrote saying "Ghose had never appeared." Brough added—"he would prefer not to examine Ghose."

(f) Colonel Brough, however, agreed to examine him "if some one from this office were present". (9th Nov.)

Ghose ordered to call here at noon on the 10th. He came at ten minutes to one.

"I then showed Ghose, Colonel Brough's latest letter fixing the 15th Nov. for the Examination and naming the train 2.22 from Charing Cross. Told him to meet me at 2.15 on the platform at Charing Cross."

"I went there yesterday (15th Nov.)—but no Ghose appeared. I went to Woolwich—He was not there."

"While waiting at Charing Cross I had sent a message to Mr. Bonar asking him to send a messenger round to his house to enquire. The messenger brought word that Ghose was out and was not expected till 6 P.M."

It is clear that he could have appeared on (1) 9th August, (2) 26th October, (3) 5th November, (4) 15th November. That he did not do so is a fact, and it conclusively proves that he did not want to appear for the Riding Test.

The question may be asked : "Why did he not want to appear, specially when he had passed the Examination in writing ?"[1]

There are several possible answers : he told us in his evening talks during his early years at Pondicherry that he did not want to join the I.C.S. and yet he did not like to tell his father about it. So he managed to get rejected.

[1] Sri Aurobindo has himself very explicitly stated the reason for his not appearing for the Riding Test in the following note given by him while reading the manuscript of one of his biographers submitted to him for verification and approval a few years before his passing away in 1950 :

"Nothing detained him in his room. He felt no call for the I.C.S. and was seeking some way to escape from the bondage. By certain manœuvres he managed to get himself disqualified for riding without himself rejecting the Service, which his family would not have allowed him to do."

Sri Aurobindo On Himself And The Mother, p. 12. (Editor)

Of course, he was hard up for money and prepared the I.C.S. course without a tutor. He could not afford the expenses of frequent riding lessons.

His advocay of Indian political freedom in the Majlis at Cambridge was not the unripe eloquence of a raw undergraduate. It was something that came from a deep conviction of his soul. That this was so is amply borne out by the fact of his plunge into Indian politics immediately on his return to India. He wrote that famous series of articles "New Lamps for Old" in the *Induprakash* in 1893.

That the final rejection of Mr. Cotton's offer (see VIII) and his own memorial (see XI) was influenced by Lord Kimberly's "obiter dictum" (see XIX) which may have been formed by the reports from the Cambridge Majlis in which a future civil servant was represented as ventilating revolutionary views about Indian freedom, seems quite evident.

V

Letter dated 17th November, 1892

(*From the Civil Service Commission to the Under Secretary of State, India Office.*)

This conveys to the Sec. of State the C.S. Commissioners' rejection of Sri Aurobindo. It says : "although several opportunities have been offered to Mr. A. A. Ghose of attending for examination in Riding...he has repeatedly failed to attend at the time appointed." Therefore they are "unable to certify that he is qualified to be appointed to the Civil Service of India."

VI

Minute dated 18th November, 1892

(*This is a minute on the C.S. Commissioners' letter prepared in the office of the Sec. of State for circulation "for information" to the Under Secretary, the Secretary of State and to the Committee.*)

From which we obtain the following : "Mr. Ghose obtained the 11th place at the open competition of 1890, was No. 23 in the

First Periodical Examination, No. 19 in the Second Periodical and No. 37 in the final last August."

VIII and IX

Letter dated 19th November, 1892

(From Mr. James S. Cotton to Sir Arthur Macpherson, Secretary, Judicial and Public Dept. India Office.)

Letter dated 20th November, 1892

(From Mr. G. M. Prothero to Mr. J. S. Cotton and sent by him to the C. S. Commissioners.)

When the rejection seemed final two Englishmen—Mr. Cotton and Mr. Prothero took up Sri Aurobindo's cause. The reader will find the implacability of red-tape relieved by the gust of sympathy and warm-hearted support of these two gentlemen who represent the real culture of England.

Mr. James S. Cotton of the Kensington Liberal Club was one of the editors of the "Academy". He was born in India at Coonor and was brother of Sir Henry Cotton, I.C.S., who took a prominent part in starting the Indian National Congress in those early days.

Mr. G. M. Prothero was Senior Tutor at Cambridge. He later became Sir and a prominent historian. This testimony coming as it does unsolicited from a University man throws a unique light on Sri Aurobindo as a student at Cambridge. The tribute paid by Mr. Prothero to Sri Aurobindo, not only as an intellectual, but as a man of character, is highly significant.

These letters require no comment as they speak for themselves.

XI

Letter dated 21st November, 1892

(This is a memorial from Sri Aurobindo to the Earl of Kimberley, the Secretary of State for India.)

It is evident that Sri Aurobindo wrote this unwillingly because of his elder brother Binoy Bhushan's persuasion and the moral

pressure of Mr. James S. Cotton. Mr. Cotton writes in his letter: "I have therefore instructed him to present a petition without delay to Lord Kimberley."

In this memorial there is an autobiographical note of deep pathos relating to his financial condition during those years.

"I was sent over to England when seven years of age, with my two elder brothers, and for the last eight years we have been thrown on our own resources without any English friend to help or advise us. Our father, Dr. K. D. Ghose of Khulna, has been unable to provide the three of us with sufficient for the most necessary wants and we have long been in an embarrassed position."

This is proof that Sri Aurobindo had drunk deep of the bitter cup of poverty from his childhood. And immediately on his return to his homeland it was Mother India that claimed him.

XII—XIII—XIV

Minute dated 21st November, 1892

(*This is a Minute from the office of the Secretary of State on Mr. A. A. Ghose's letter.*)

Based on this Minute, a reply to the Civil Service Commissioners was drafted on the 25th November, 1892, with corrections, alterations and additions, transmitting Sri Aurobindo's memorial to the C. S. Commissioners. It shifts the responsibility from the Secretary of State for India to the Indian Civil Service Commissioner.

A draft of the reply sent to Sri Aurobindo on the 26th November also accompanies this Minute.

XVI

Minute dated 30th November, 1892

(*This is a Minute on the Civil Service Commissioners' letter prepared in the office of the Secretary of State for India.*)

It contains the views of the members of the Committee of the Secretary of State for India.

XVII

Letter dated 29th November, 1892

(From the Civil Service Commission to the Under Secretary of State, India Office.)

This conveys to the Secretary of State the final rejection by the Civil Service Commission of the memorial sent by Sri Aurobindo on the 21st November and returns the memorial to the Secretary of State.

XVIII-XIX

Minutes dated 1st and 2nd December, 1892

(Minutes of Mr. G. W. Russell, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for India and Lord Kimberley.)

The Secretary of State throws the responsibility of deciding Sri Aurobindo's case on the Civil Service Commission. The note by Mr. Russell, dated 1st December, 1892, recommends Sri Aurobindo's case for reconsideration. He says: "I should like the candidate another chance of qualifying. The Commissioners are not very emphatic against it. They only say they are not themselves disposed to grant it. They might be perfectly willing to grant it on a hint from you." Mr. Russell could not press Sri Aurobindo's case to Lord Kimberley in a more emphatic way. He says: "The candidate seems to me a remarkably deserving man and I can quite believe that poverty was the cause of his failure to appear."

But Lord Kimberley's mind was already made up. He says: "I am sorry that I cannot take a compassionate view as Mr. Russell suggests of the case." And he even goes out of his way to add an "obiter dictum": "I must add however as an obiter dictum that I should much doubt whether Mr. Ghose would be a desirable addition to the Service."

Lord Kimberley seems to have been particularly piqued by Mr. Prothero's strongly-worded letter.

It is also evident that Mr. Russell's pleading must have been the result of Mr. James Cotton's strong influence.

XX

Letter dated 7th December, 1892

(*From the Secretary of State's Office to Mr. A. A. Ghose.*)

This is the final rejection by the Secretary of State for India.

It may be added that there were cases in which candidates who had not passed the Riding Test were nominated to the I.C.S. in India and passed their Riding Examination while serving in India. That course was open to the C.S. Commissioners and to the Secretary of State for India.

XXII

Letter dated 12th December, 1892

(*This is another memorial from Sri Aurobindo to the Secretary of State.*)

It asks for the payment of £150 due to be paid to him as a probationer for the I.C.S.

Evidently, James S. Cotton and Binoy Bhushan had pressed him to make this request. Though, in fact, it was a legitimate claim, he himself was not inclined to make such a petition.

XXIII

Minute dated 12th December, 1892

(*This is a minute on Mr. A. A. Ghose's letter prepared in the office of the Secretary of State.*)

The memorial was circulated and the opinion was in favour of giving £150.

Here is the first mention of the Service at Baroda :

("N.B. Mr. J. S. Cotton informs me that he has grounds for

hoping that Mr. Ghose will obtain at once an appointment in the Service for the Gaekwar of Baroda.")

The minute states:

"As this is the first case of a candidate rejected after passing his Periodical and *final* examination on account of failing to pass his *Riding* Examination, it is submitted that the allowance of £ 150 be paid to Mr. A. A. Ghose on the ground that candidates who in past years have lost their appointment through not qualifying in passing the *medical* examination have been allowed to receive the sums due on passing the Final Examination."

The payment was authorised and paid on the 22nd December, 1892.

It is interesting to know how the brothers took the decision of I.C.S. Commissioners and the Secretary of State with regard to Sri Aurobindo's memorial which he was urged to write by James S. Cotton and Binoy Bhushan. Sri Aurobindo later recounted that he was wandering in the streets of London when he knew he should have been at Woolwich. When he came home late in the evening he told Binoy "I am chucked", with almost a derisive smile. Binoy took it rather philosophically and offered to play cards. After some time Mono Mohan dropped in and on learning about his rejection from I.C.S. set up a howl as if heavens had fallen. After that all three sat down to smoke and began to play cards.

The question of Sri Aurobindo's career had to be solved after the rejection from the I.C.S. In fact, James S. Cotton had already started negotiations with the Gaekwad Baroda, Sir Sayaji Rao, who was then in London. There is a reference to this in the correspondence with the India Office. (See Minute XXIII)

So by the end of December 1892 everything seemed to be settled, and Sri Aurobindo sailed in the 'Carthage' to join the Baroda State service. The meagre salary on which he was appointed was not accepted by Sri Aurobindo himself. He had no experience of worldly life and so left the negotiations to other people. It was on their advice that he accepted the offer. The H.H. was very pleased to have an I.C.S. man for Rs. 200/- per month.

Soon he left for India by S.S.Carthage. There was a sequel which was humorous for Sri Aurobindo when he related it. A certain tailor in Cambridge was not to be deprived of what he believed to

be his dues,—in this case £4/-, even when Sri Aurobindo had left England and joined the Baroda State service. Sri Aurobindo said he never felt that he was bound to pay the sum, firstly because Mono Mohan used to buy costly stuff and leave bills unpaid, and secondly because he knew that the tailor was always charging double as he had to take credit for want of hard cash. He knew that the tailor had more than his due already. The tailor wrote to the Bengal Government and even to the Baroda State and when Sri Aurobindo explained the situation His Highness persuaded him to pay and the money was sent.

The relation between the three brothers during their stay in England is an obscure chapter of their life. There is no authentic proof about it except the letters written by Mono Mohan to Laurence Binyon. It emerges from these letters that Mono Mohan felt himself a little out of tune with the other two—he went into different lodgings when they went to 128, Cromwell Street,—the office of the Kensington Liberal Club.

In a letter dated 20th April 1887 he writes to Laurence about his poetic efforts :

"You are the only one who gives me any encouragement to write....My brothers are quite apathetic about them". And yet Mono Mohan's preoccupation with poetry must have stimulated Sri Aurobindo who had the incipient poet in him already trying to come to his own.

In another letter from Hastings, dated 1887, he evidently refers to Sri Aurobindo when he writes : "you have not been the only one to think some of my verses have a similarity to Mathew Arnold's. My brother once remarked to me that he thought I imitated Mathew Arnold in many of my poems. You will believe me when I say, if I have imitated him, it is perfectly unconsciously".

On January 8, 1890, he gives an account of his illness in a letter and describes his miserable condition. There is a reference to his brother—evidently to Binoy Bhusan—for, Sri Aurobindo must have been at Cambridge at the time—from which it is also certain Mono Mohan must have been staying in separate lodgings: "At last to my joy my brother came to see me, who as you know is a very matter of fact person, with a commercial mind, a person who looks at everything from a business point of view. And he

began comforting me very cheerfully with reflection that every body must die some day, remarking how conveniently near the cemetery was (Kempsford Gardens, I must tell you, looks out upon Brompton Cemetery and funerals pass down it everyday) and hoping undertakers did not charge very high as he had nearly come to the end of his last remittance".

Perhaps Binoy could not, under the economic stringency in London, be anything else than a matter of fact person, and especially when the remittances had come to an end and he had to learn, perforce, to look at everything from a business point of view.

In a letter of July 13, 1890, he again writes to Laurence: "I intend to do some tutoring work and writing in the meantime which will give enough to live on, with a little help from my brother." So Binoy was rendering help to Mono Mohan to the extent possible from the remittances. Mono Mohan also asked for a copy of Prima versa for his brother from Laurence. That very likely was for Sri Aurobindo.

From Mono Mohan's correspondence it appears clear that his romantic temperament, the outer exuberance of his poetic nature and his great attraction for England made it not only his adopted country for a time but a country in which he loved to settle permanently. In the case of Sri Aurobindo we see he had no regret in leaving England. He had formed few friendships there and none very intimate. He did not find the mental atmosphere congenial. Somebody referred to his poem "Envoi" and stated that it showed his attachment to England. Sri Aurobindo replied : "There was an attachment to English thought and literature, but not to England, he had no ties there and did not make England his adopted country as Mono Mohan did for a time".

Mono Mohan's politics, we can see in his letters, breathes high patriotism but at the end he gives it up and writes :

Hastings, 8th August, 1887.

"As for me I am going to throw politics overboard and have nothing more to do with them....I must leave my unhappy country to her own woes, she will go the way she is destined whatever that may be, and indeed I could help her little. I shall bury myself

in poetry, simply and solely." He did. But this is in such a striking contrast to Sri Aurobindo's powerful advocacy of Indian independence and his revolutionary attitude even when he was at Cambridge. In fact, he himself answers the question how and when he got interested in Indian politics :

"His father began sending *The Bengalee* newspaper with passages marked relating cases of maltreatment of Indians by Englishmen and he wrote in his letters denouncing the British Government in India as a heartless government. At the age of eleven Sri Aurobindo had already received a strong impression that a period of general upheaval and great revolutionary changes was coming in the world and he himself was destined to play a part in it. His attention was now drawn to India and this feeling was soon canalised into the Idea of the liberation of his own country. But the "firm decision" took full shape only towards the end of another four years. It had already been made when he went to Cambridge and as a member and for some time secretary of the Indian Majlis at Cambridge he delivered many revolutionary speeches which, as he afterwards learnt, had their part in determining the authorities to exclude him from the Indian Civil Service; the failure in the riding test was only the occasion, for in some other cases an opportunity was given for remedying this defect in India itself."

Sri Aurobindo on Himself, P. 13

That the decision of liberating the country was taken by him is shown by his joining the "Lotus and Dagger" society before he left for India. It was a "Secret Society in which each member vowed to work for the liberation of India generally and to take some special work in furtherence of that end. He became a member along with his brothers. But the Society was still-born". This happened immediately before his return to India and when he had finally left Cambridge,—that is, between October 1892 and Dec. 1892. The seven articles he wrote in the *Induprakash*—"New lamps for old"—immediately on his return to India, on Indian independence advocating a new ideal, a new approach and a new method to the Indian National Congress for adopting, is

a further sign that his interest in India's freedom was not merely academic but dynamic, it was an intense flame that touched many Indian hearts and set them ablaze.

Some people have supposed that Sri Aurobindo studied Greek philosophy while he was in England. It is not true. He read Plato's "Republic" and his "Symposium", but he did not study Greek philosophy. He had heard of Heraclitus while in England but he read his work after coming to India. He did not read the German philosophers.

The fact is that his philosophy developed after the practice of Yoga. Thoughts used to come down upon him as a result of Sadhana. If anything can be said to have helped him in that direction it is the reading of the Gita and the Upanishads, and the basic ideas of the Vedanta with which he was familiar.

Sri Aurobindo began the study of Bengali while he was at Cambridge. The teacher for Bengali then was Mr. Towers. Sri Aurobindo used to say he[1] was called "Pandit Towers". His knowledge of Bengali was limited to the works of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and early writers of Sanskritised prose. He knew Bodhodaya and other similar works. Once Sri Aurobindo took a passage of Bankim Chandra to him. After reading it carefully "Pandit Towers" turned round and said, "But this is not Bengali!"

In the Majlis there used to be enough room for humour. The question of independence of subjected nations was being discussed. One undergraduate spoke eloquently and citing the example of Egypt repeated two or three times during his speech, "The Egyptians rose up like a man", when he spoke it for the third time somebody from the audience demanded, "But how many times they sat down?"

A funny anecdote was recalled by Sri Aurobindo about his life at Cambridge : "Liars!" Well, a Panjabi student at Cambridge once took our breath away by the frankness and comprehensive

[1] Venn Alunini Cantabrigenses, Part II, Vol VI, p. 214. Towers Robert Mason, M.A. 1889, incorporated from Dublin, I.C.S. University Teacher of Bengali 1888-1907. Admitted at Gains 1889. Son of Rev. Robert Towers, deceased, of Affane, Co. Waterford, Born, June 27, 1840 at Grange, County Tripperary. School, Kilkeny. (M.A. Trinity College, Dublin), died by his own hand April 6th, 1907, at Cambridge.

profundity of his affirmation, "we are all liars". He meant "Lawyers" but his pronunciation gave his remark a deep force of philosophic observation and generalisation which he had not intended. But it seems to me the last word on human nature."

About Sri Aurobindo's stay in England no more information is available than is placed here. One is not likely to unearth more except from those few who are still alive and were contemporaries either at St. Paul's or at King's. However, it is satisfactory that testimony of three diferent men—Dr. K.D.Ghose, G.M.Prothero and Oscar Browning—is available not only about his brilliant academic career, but about his character even as a student. It is very likely that Dr. F. W. Walker must have impressed Sri Aurobindo profoundly during his career at St. Paul's. His deeply sympathetic nature could not have escaped Sri Aurobindo even in his young age.

In fact, Sri Aurobindo did recollect one or two inner changes that took place in him while he was in England. At the age of 13 he became conscious that he was selfish and he felt from inside that he should give up selfishness. He tried to carry out that idea in his own way in life.[1]

Another time while reading Max Muller's translations in the Sacred Books of the East Series he came across the idea of self

[1] "But what strange ideas again ! That I was born with a Supramental temperament and that I knew nothing of hard realities ! Good God ! My whole life has been a struggle with hard realities—from hardships, starvation in England and constant dangers and fierce difficulties to the far greater difficulties constantly cropping up here in Pondicherry, external and internal. My life has been a battle ; the fact that I wage it now from a room upstairs and by spiritual means as well as others that are external makes no difference to its character.

"I suppose I have had myself an even more completely European education than you, and I have had too, my period of agnostic denial, but from the moment I looked at these things I could never take the attitude of doubts and disbelief which was for so long fashionable in Europe."

"I myself have never been a sportsman nor—apart from taking a spectator's interest in cricket in England or a non-player member of the Baroda Club—taken up any physical games or athletics except some exercises learnt from Madrasi wrestlers in Baroda, such as Dand and Baithak, and these I took up only to put some strength and vigour into a frail and weak though not unhealthy body."

or Atman. That struck him as some reality and he decided in his mind that Vedanta has something that is to be realised in life.

King's College,
Cambridge.
20th Nov., 1892.

Dear Sir,

I am very sorry to hear what you tell me about Ghose, that he has been rejected in his final I.C.S. Examination for failure in riding. His conduct throughout his two years here was most exemplary. He had a foundation scholarship which he obtained (before passing his first I.C.S. Examination) by open competition, in classics. His pecuniary circumstances prevented him from resigning this, when he became a selected candidate, and the regulations of the scholarship obliged him to devote a great part of his time to classics, of course to some extent to the disadvantage of his I.C.S. studies. He performed his part of the bargain, as regards the College most honourably, and took a high place in the 1st class of the classical Tripos at the end of the second year of his residence. He also obtained certain College prizes, showing command of English and literary ability. That a man should have been able to do this (which alone is quite enough for most undergraduates), and at the same time to keep up his I.C.S. work, proves very unusual industry and capacity. Besides his classical scholarships he possessed a knowledge of English Literature far beyond the average of undergraduates and wrote a much better English style than most young Englishmen. That a man of this calibre should be lost to the Indian Government merely because he failed in sitting on a horse or did not keep an appointment appears to me, I confess, a piece of official short-sightedness which it would be hard to beat.

Moreover, the man has not only ability but character. He has had a very hard and anxious time of it for the last two years. Supplies from home have almost entirely failed, and he has had to keep his two brothers as well as himself, and yet his courage and perseverance have never failed. I have several times written to his father on his behalf, but for the most part unsuccessfully. It is only lately that I managed to extract from him enough to pay some tradesmen who would otherwise have put his son into the

County Court. I am quite sure that these pecuniary difficulties were not due to any extravagance on Ghose's part: his whole way of life, which was simple and penurious in the extreme, is against this: they were due entirely to circumstances beyond his control. But they must have hampered him in many ways, and prevented him from spending enough on horses to enable him to learn to ride. I can fully believe that his inability to keep his appointment at Woolwich was due to the want of cash.

In conclusion, I hope sincerely that your efforts to reinstate him as a selected candidate will prove successful for I think, if he is finally tossed out, it will be, however legally justifiable, a moral injustice to him, and a very real loss to the Indian Government. It may also perhaps be suggested that to reject so able a Hindoo because he cannot ride is likely to give rise to serious misunderstanding in India and to open the door to a charge of partiality, which is of course absolutely unprovable, but which might be put forward by natives into some plausibility.

Yours most truly,

G. M. Prothero

An article in the Calcutta Review June 1931, *by Harihar Das refers to Sri Aurobindo's career in England.*

"In concluding this short account of Sri Aurobindo some reference must be made to his academic distinctions. He was for some time at St. Paul's School, London, where in 1889, he gained the Butterworth Second Prize. He left school the following year having gained a scholarship at King's College, Cambridge, where he was considered the most distinguished Indian student of his day, showing a marked taste for the European classics. He was also preparing for the Indian Civil Service, and in July, 1890, he secured eleventh place in the competitive examination. In 1892, he obtained First Class (Division III), Classical Tripos, Part I. The same year he was awarded the Rawley Prize for Greek Iambics.

"Sri Aurobindo, a Study" By Harihar Das

As a further proof of his scholastic and literary attainments, extracts from two letters addressed to the present writer are inserted here. The first is from an Irishman, Professor R.S.Lepper, M.A., who was an undergraduate with Sri Aurobindo at King's College during 1890-91, and formerly in the service of His Highness the Maharajah of Travancore. He writes:—"I knew him in those days quite well, and have happy recollections of him as a brilliant young classical scholar, an open Entrance Scholar of the College, of marked literary and poetic taste, and as far as I ever saw a young man of high character and modest bearing, who was liked by all who knew him. He was, of course also a student of Sanskrit, and having passed his Entrance Examination for the Indian Civil Service, as well as for Part I of the Classical Tripos.

"In the latter he secured a First Class at the end of his second year, a highly creditable success. Unfortunately for him he was, I understand, a very bad horseman, and proficiency in horse-riding was obligatory for Indian Civil Servants (convenanted). I believe he was given three separate trials, in one of (sic) which he fell off the horse (a not unusual end of his practice rides, I understand) and at the two other trials he failed to appear. Not altogether unnaturally, the examiners, considering him hopeless on horseback, disqualified him.

"Mr. Ghose, I understand, left India when quite a child and knew practically nothing of Indian conditions except by hearsay; so his information and opinion on India were at times grotesquely inaccurate, especially on Europeans living there.

"He was also, I think, suffering from a sort of religious or spiritual nausea, due apparently to long continued overdoses of a narrow type of Christianity inflicted on him, doubtless with excellent intentions, by some probably devout old ladies, into whose care, I believe, he had been committed when a young boy at school in London. The effect of this dosing was naturally to make him a confirmed pantheist, with a quite understandable dislike of Christian Missionaries."

* *

The second extract is from a letter by an Englishman who was a fellow-scholar of Sri Aurobindo, and reads as follows:—

"As to Mr. Aravinda Ackroyd Ghose, (2) though he was in my year, I saw but little of him, so that I can give no information of interest. At the same time I did occasionally come across him. He was a very able Classical Scholar, easily first in this subject in the entrance Scholarship Examination, and probably only the fact that, to satisfy the regulations of the Indian Civil Service, he had to take University Tripos after two years (instead of the usual three) prevented him from being in the top division of the First Class in the final test.

"With regard to his life at Cambridge a complete lack of interest in games must have lessened his enjoyment of the life of the place. His interests were in literature: among Greek poets for instance he once waxed enthusiastic over Sappho, and he had a nice feeling of English style. Yet for England itself he seemed to have small affection; it was not only the climate that he found trying: as an example, he became quite indignant when on one occasion I called England the modern Athens. This title, he declared, belonged to France: England much more resembled Corinth, a commercial state, and therefore unattractive to him.

"I only hope that his views of the English race are more charitable now than they were in the "nineties", for some of his mental and moral virtues may surely be imputed to his English education."

* *

Q : You did not appear in the riding test in your I.C.S. ?

Sri Aurobindo : No. They gave me another chance but I again did not appear and finally they rejected me.

Q : But then why did you appear for the I.C.S. ? Was it by some intuition that you did not appear for the riding test ?

Sri Aurobindo : Not at all. I knew nothing about Yoga at that time. I appeared for the I.C.S. because my father wanted it and I was too young to understand. Later, I found out what sort of work it is and I had a disgust for administrator's life and I had no interest in administrative work. My interest was in poetry and literature and study of languages and patriotic action.

Dec. 18, 1938.

* *

Sarojini seems to have said that Sri Aurobindo was playing cards *at the time appointed* for the riding test. This is not true. He was not playing cards at the time of riding test. He was only wandering in the streets of London to pass away time. At last when he came to Woolwhich he was too late. The trainer had come and gone. He came back home and told his elder brother, "I am chucked."

BARODA

"THE thought of Baroda brought into my mind the connection with the Gaekwar. It is strange how things arrange themselves at times e.g. when I failed in the I.C.S. when I was looking for a job exactly then the Gaekwar happened to be in London. I don't know whether he called us or we met him but an elderly gentleman whom we consulted was quite willing to propose Rs. 200 per month i.e. he thought £ 10 was a good enough sum and the Gaekwar went about telling people that he had got a civilian for Rs. 200 It is surprising the authority was quite satisfied with Rs. 200 per month.

"But I left the negotiations to my eldest brother and James Cotton. I knew nothing about life at that time."

* *

Our landlady was an angel. She came from Somerset and settled in London perhaps after she was widowed. She was long suffering and never asked for months and months if we did not pay. I wonder how she managed.

We had two such landladies. The other also was nice to us. I paid from my I.C.S. Stipend.

It was partly father's fault that I failed in the riding test. He did not send money and riding lessons at Cambridge at that time were rather costly. And the Master was also careless, so long as he got money he simply left me with the horse and I was not particular. I tried again at Baroda with Madhav Rao—but was not successful. It was a disappointment to him (father) because he had arranged everything for me through Sir Henry Cotton. He had arranged to get me placed in the district of Arraha which is regarded as a very fine place and that Sir Henry Cotton would look after me.

All that came down like a wall. I wonder what would have

happened to me if I had joined the Civil Service. I think they would have chucked me for laziness and arrears of my work.

16-1-1939

* *

Then I went to London. He somehow traced me there and found Mono Mohan also. Then he canvassed orders from him. Mono Mohan went in for Velvet-suit not staring red but Aesthetic (brown) and he used to visit Oscar Wilde in that suit.

Then he came away to India. But the tailor was not to be deprived of his dues. He wrote to the Government of Bengal and to the Baroda Government for recovering the sum from Mono Mohan and me.

I had paid up all my dues and kept £4 or so and I did not think that I was bound to pay it since he always charged me double. But as His Highness said I had better pay it—I paid.

Mono Mohan used to play the poet in England. He had poetical illness and used to moan out his verses in deep tones. We were passing through Cumberland. We shouted to him but he paid no heed and came afterwards leisurely at his own pace. His poet-playing dropped after he came to India.

8-1-1939

* *

1893

Sri Aurobindo returned to India in the beginning of 1893 and joined Baroda service on 8th Feb. 1893. Unfortunately his father died a few days before his return under tragic circumstances. It is clear from Dr. K. D. Ghose's letter of 2nd Dec. 1890 that he had high hopes of the careers of his three sons, especially of Sri Aurobindo's. He wanted him to take up judicial or administrative work in the Indian Government for which he had used his influence. He heard of his appointment in Baroda and was wrongly informed by the bankers, Messrs. Grindley & Co., about Sri Aurobindo's departure from London. That steamer by which Sri Aurobindo was supposed to have left was sunk off the coast of Portugal near

Lisbon. Dr. K. D. Ghose read about this accident and concluded that Sri Aurobindo was drowned. The shock was so great that he had a heart attack and died of heart-failure repeating Sri Aurobindo's name.

As a matter of fact, Sri Aurobindo left by a mail steamer "Carthage" and though it encountered a violent storm in the Mediterranean, Sri Aurobindo reached India quite safe. This must be in the beginning of February 1893.

When Sri Aurobindo put his foot on the soil of India, he experienced a tremendous peace. This is one of the experiences that came to him unasked.

Baroda service

From 8th February 1893 to 18th June 1907. Sri Aurobindo's age 21 when he joined, 33 years when he left.

Period of service 13 years 5 months, 17 days.

I. "Sri Aurobindo talked very little, perhaps because he believed it to be better to speak as little as possible about oneself."

II. "Desireless, a man of few words, balanced in his diet, self-controlled, always given to study."

III. "Sri Aurobindo did not speak about himself, as if acquiring knowledge was his sole mission in life".

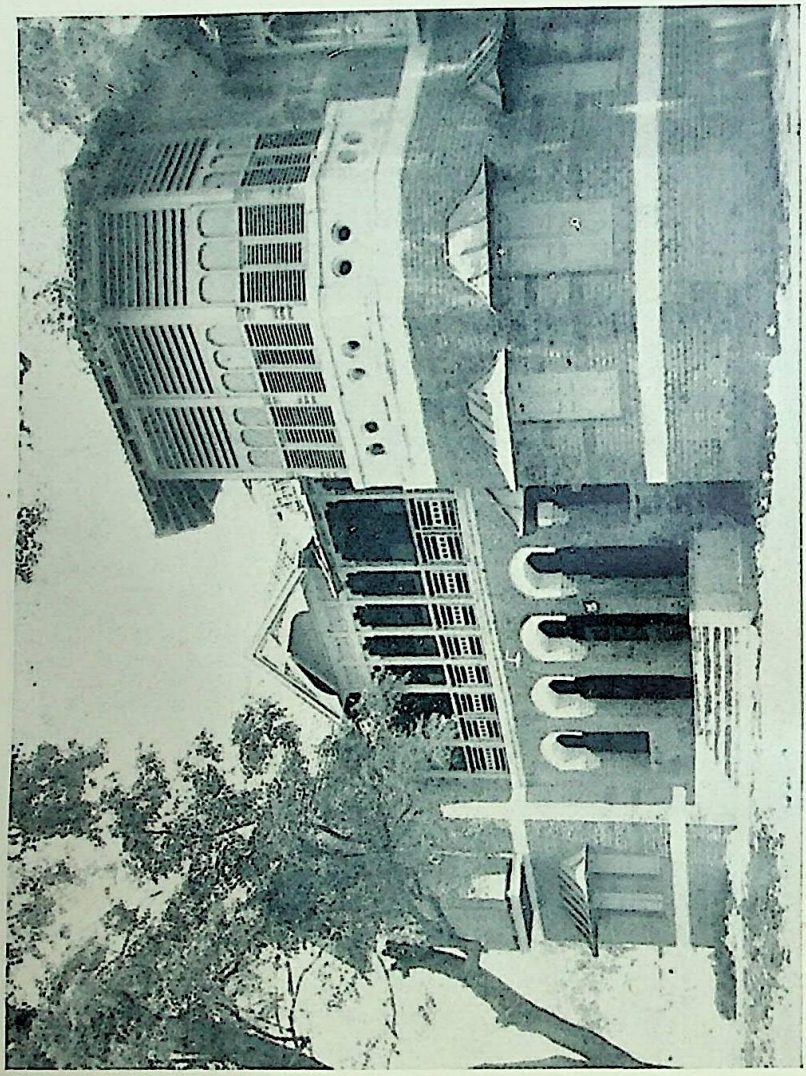
Dinendra Kumar Roy

(*About Dr. K. D. Ghose's death, an account by Brajendra Nath De was published in* 1954 *which is reproduced here*:—)

"Dr. K.D. Ghose did not belong to the Indian Medical Service. He was C.M.O. i.e. (Civil Medical Officer).

"Good doctor, large practice" in Khulna (Jessore even Baker-Gunj). He was Chairman of Khulna Municipality, and Vice-Chairman of District Board. (Sarojini and Barin were staying at Khulna and at Calcutta). Binoy Bhushan was posted at Cooch Bihar. (This was later).

Dr. Ghose believed up to the end that his son had been admitted into the I.C.S. and was in fact coming out. He, in fact, took a month's leave to go and meet him in Bombay, and bring him back



Khashirao Jadhava's House, Baroda

in triumph, but he could not get any definite news as to when he was coming out and returned from Bombay in a very depressed frame of mind. One afternoon he got a wire from his Agents in Bombay that his son's name did not appear in the list of passangers by the steamer in which he had been expecting his son to come out to India.

It so happened that the very night he and the Superintendent of Police were coming to dine at my house. The dinner was ready, the Superintendent came, but there was no sign of the doctor, although his bungalow was quite close to my house. After waiting for some time I sent an orderly to remind him of the fact that he had agreed to dine at my house that night. The man came back and informed that the doctor was very ill. I at once went round and heard of the telegram and found the doctor very ill and quite unconscious. The other medical men in the station were assiduous in their attention. I did what I could. But it was of no avail. The poor man lingered on for a day or two and then passed away. I had to take the body to the cremation ground and to attend the cremation."

BRAJENDRA NATH DE

Reminiscences of an Indian Member of I.C.S.

The Calcutta Review 1954, July to December. Vol. 132, No. 1

The quotations given above are from "Sri Aurobindo Prasang" by Dinendra Kumar Roy who remained with Sri Aurobindo during 1898-99 to familiarise him with the Bengali language. Life at Baroda was full, though the political career that followed was like a tornado. Activity during this period can be divided into five parts.

I. Service in various departments of the State.

II. Literary activity, reading and study. This part is partly connected with college work.

III. Political activity—articles in the *Induprakash* and beginning of revolutionary movement, visits to Bengal during vacations for that purpose.

IV. Spiritual life.

V. Family life.

During this period whenever Khaserao Jadhav was in Baroda Sri Aurobindo stayed with him in his house at Dandia Bazar, and

in his absence he stayed with his brother Madhavrao Jadhav. Several other houses were also occupied at different times in Baroda.

I. In the camp near the Bazar

II. Kiledar's Wadi, on the way to Makarpura Palace.

II. Mir Bakarali's Wada, near Shiapura.

IV. Behind the college on the way to Camp (Government quarters).

2-8-1893

Beginning of service in the Survey Settlement Department, pay Rs. 200/- per month. He was asked to get acquainted with various Departments. In some he had to learn the routine work and observe the procedure of the Departmental work. From the Settlement Department he went over to the Stamp and Revenue Department. After that he worked for some time in the Secretariat. He worked with the probationers in the Vahivatdar's office to pick up the work. But permanent work was at last given to him in the Baroda College.

"*New Lamps for Old*"

We promised our readers some times back a series on our present political progress by an extremely able and keen observer of the present times. We are very much pleased to give our readers the first instalment of that series. The title under which these views appear is "New Lamps for Old", which is suggestive, though a metaphorical one. The preface will take us over to the next issue. The views therein contained are not those that are commonly held by our politicians, and for this reason they are very important. We have been convinced that our efforts in political progress are not sustained, but, are lacking in vigour. Hypocrisy has been the besetting sin of our political agitation. Oblique vision is the fashion. True, matter of fact, honest criticism is very badly needed. Our institutions have no strong foundation and are in hourly danger of falling down. Under these circumstances, it was idle, nay criminal...to remain silent while our whole energy in political progress was spent in a wrong direction. The questions at issue are momen-

Sri Aurobindo
(*at Baroda*, 1907)

tous. It is the making or unmaking of the nation. We have, therefore, secured a gentleman of great literary talents, of liberal culture and of considerable experience, well versed in the art of writing, at great personal inconvenience and probable misrepresentation, to give out his views in no uncertain voice, and, we may be allowed to add, in a style and direction peculiarly his own. We bespeak our readers' most careful and constant persual on his behalf and assure them that they will find in those articles matter that will set them thinking and stir their patriotic souls.

Induprakash K.G. DESHPANDE[1]
7-8-1893

In the beginning his services were lent to the College from other Departments for French lessons for certain periods in the week. So he began his work in the college as Lecturer in French. Other work of the college was gradually added. At last the Principal requested the Maharaja to appoint him on the permanent post of Professor of English and he rose from it to be the Vice Principal of the college. Once he acted for the Principal in his absence.

But before he took up permanent work in the college he used to be called by the Maharaja from his home for the personal work, either for drafting some important letter, or making a digest of some correspondence or documents, or even to draft agreements. This was outside his official work. But in spite of this fact, it must be mentioned that Sri Aurobindo was never Personal Secretary to the Maharaja. Only once, 1903, the Maharaja took him as secretary for the Kashmir tour but as the experience was not pleasant it was not repeated.

In 1893 from 7th August to February 1894 Sri Aurobindo contributed to the Induprakash of Bombay a series of political articles

[1] K.G. Deshpande, after his return from England, settled in Bombay as a barrister and was also editor of the English section of the *Indu Prakash*. The paper had a Marathi Section also. On Sri Aurobindo's joining the Baroda State, Deshpande requested him—knowing his strong nationalist views at Cambridge—to write articles about the Indian Congress. Deshpande subsequently joined the Baroda Satte Service in 1898—five years after Sri Aurobindo.

entitled "New lamps for old", in which he severely criticised the policy of the Indian National Congress. Sri Aurobindo was pressed by K. G. Deshpande, his Cambridge friend, to write the series. Deshpande was the editor of the English section of the Induprakash. But the publication of the first two articles created a furore in political circles and Mahadev Govind Ranade, the famous Maratha leader, who was connected with the paper sent a warning to the editor that he might be prosecuted for sedition. Deshpande was in a fix. He requested Sri Aurobindo to tone down his criticism a little, do it in milder terms. After that Sri Aurobindo lost all enthusiasm for writing the series and even though he somehow finished it he took a long time to do it. He never liked the mendicant policy of the Congress.

A few extracts from that historical series : "New lamps for old".

1. "I say of the Congress, then, this,—that its aims are mistaken, that the spirit in which it proceeds towards their accomplishment is not a spirit of sincerity and whole-heartedness, and that the methods it has chosen are not the right methods, and the leaders in whom it trusts not the right sort of men to be leaders :—in brief we are at present the blind led, if not by the blind, at any rate by the one-eyed."

2. "For, by reflection or instinct to get a clear insight into our position and by dexterity to make the most of it, that is the whole secret of the politics, and that is just what we have failed to do."

3. "We lose in sincerity which is another name for strength".

4. "So long as this temper prevails, we shall never realise how utterly it is beyond the power of even an excellent machine to rennovate an effect and impoverished national character and how palpably requisite to commence from within and not depend on any exterior agency."

5. "To put it in a concrete form, Paris may be said to revolve around the Theatre, the Municipal council, and the French Academy, London looks rather to the House of Commons, and New York to the Stock Exchange."

This series brought out many political questions and powers of Sri Aurobindo for the first time before the public,—an all-encompassing grasp, a subtle power of thought, capacity for expression and mastery over the language, rare courage, utter sincerity, burning

patriotism and selfless character. All these can be seen in the Induprakash series even now after fifty-eight years.

The circle of friends at Baroda included Madhavrao and Khasirao Jadhavo, K. G. Deshpande, Fadke, Mangesh Kolasker etc. Mr. Fadke had taken a photograph of Dinendra Kunar Roy and Sri Aurobindo.

"I remember a young Sannyasi with long nails came to Baroda. He used to stay under trees. Deshpande and myself went to see him. Deshpande asked him what is the Dharma—standard of action ?

He replied : "There is no such standard. It is the Dharma of the thief to steal because that *is* his Dharma." Deshpande was very angry to hear that. I said "It is only a point of view !"

22-1-1939

"I wrote many memoranda for the Maharaja. Generally he used to indicate the lines and I used to follow them. But I myself was not much interested in administration. My interests lay outside in Sanskrit, literature, in the National movement. When I came to Baroda from England I found out what Congress was at that time and formed a contempt for it. Then I came in touch with Deshpande, Tilak, Madhav Rao etc. Deshpande requested me to write something in the Induprakash. There I strongly criticised the congress for its moderate policy. The articles were so furious that M. G. Ranade, the great Maharashtra leader, asked the proprietor of the paper not to allow such seditious articles to appear in the paper otherwise he may be arrested and imprisoned. Deshpande approached me with the news and requested me to write something less violent. I then began to write about philosophy of politics leaving aside the practical part. But I soon got disgusted with it."

18th Dec. 1938

1894

There was a remark by the Maharaja about Sri Aurobindo suggesting him to be more diligent and regular while mentioning his capacity for quick and successful work. In fact, the work entrusted to him was sometimes very dull requiring mechanical

plodding through reports and making abstracts. Sri Aurobindo felt no enthusiasm to do that kind of work. At one time the work entrusted was consulting the time-tables of Railways in Europe !

Sri Aurobindo seems to have visited Bengal for the first time (?) this year (1894) after his return from England. He met all his relations—Swarnalata, Sarojini, Barin, Jogendra and his grand father Rajnarayan. This is how Sarojini describes his appearance : "a very delicate face, long hair cut in English fashion, Sejda (Sri Aurobindo) was a very shy person".

His mother did not recognise him,—it was perhaps natural after so long an interval—when they met. She argued "My Aurobindo was not so big, he was small !" when it was explained to her that he had come back from England after finishing his studies she suddenly got a flash of memory and said, "my Aurobindo had a cut on his finger;" in fact, he had the mark of a cut received by a broken glass bottle. The mark was shown to her and she recognised him.

1894

Sri Aurobindo met M.G. Ranade at Bombay for half an hour. It was Ranade who having read his Indu Prakash series had sent a warning to the editor. He was anxious to meet the intelligent and promising young man ! At last when an interview was arranged he found an opportunity to try to persuade Sri Aurobindo not to waste his energies in violently attacking the Congress but turn them to some constructive work like jail reform ! When Sri Aurobindo went to prison he remembered Ranade's advice and ironically wrote afterwards that he had begun the prison-reform by going to it !

1894 *from 16th to 27th August*

Sri Aurobindo continued a series of articles in the same Indu Prakash on Bankim containing literary criticism and an estimate of his work. It means, Sri Aurobindo knew Bengali well enough and had familiarised himself with works of Bankim and Madhusudan Dutt before he called Dinendra Kumar Roy in 1898 to

acquaint him with the colloquial terms and pronunciations of Bengali.

1895

He was given the work of teaching French for six hours in the week. In this year the first collection of his poems "Songs to Myrtilla" was published "for private circulation". He used to read Homer, Dante, the Mahabharata, Kalidas, Bhavabhuti, during this period. He had placed permanent orders with the Bombay firms of Booksellers, Messers, Radhabai Atmaram Sagun and Messrs. Thaker Spink & Co. to send him catalogues of new publications from which he would select books and order for them. The books used to arrive by railway parcels.

The routine of daily life was as follows :—

After morning tea Sri Aurobindo used to write poetry and continue it up to 10 o'clock. Bath between 10 and 11 o'clock. Lunch at 11 o'clock,—the cigar would be by his side even while he ate. He used to read journals while taking his meals. He took less of rice and more of bread. Once a day there was meat or fish.

There were intervals when he took to complete vegetarian diet. He was indifferent to taste. He found the Marathi food too hot (with chillies) and the Gujarati food too rich in ghee. Later, once he had a dinner at Tilak's consisting of rice, puri, legum (dal) and vegetables. He liked it for its "Spartan simplicity".

He was habituated to read far into the night and retire very late. He was a late riser.

During this period he used to send money regularly for the maintenance of his mother and for Sarojini's education at Bankipore. The two elder brothers Binoy Bhushan and Mono Mohan who had returned from England were earning also—rendered no such help to the family. When asked about it he used to say "Dada is in Coochbihar State service and so he has to maintain a certain high standard of living. Mono Mohan is married and marriage is an expensive luxury !"

1898-1899

Sri Aurobindo managed to get Sj. Dinendra Kumar Roy as

a paid tutor in order to give him occasion to be familiar with spoken Bengali. He came after the Puja Holidays, to Baroda. As already stated Sri Aurobindo had commenced learning Bengali while at Cambridge and he read many authors during his stay at Baroda. He wanted to make himself familiar with the growth of Bengali literature, to understand the idiom of the spoken language and to learn to talk it. Dinendra Kumar Roy tried to learn French and German from Sri Aurobindo. The study that he did with D.K. Roy was not of the nature of regular lessons but was more of an informal arrangement. It so happened at times that he would read and converse for a day and then for days there would be no learning at all.

Basanti (Chakravarty), daughter of Sri Aurobindo's aunt, was the first person to receive Sri Aurobindo's first letter written in Bengali. Basanti bitterly feels the loss of this letter from her possession during the Hindu Muslim riots in Bengal after Pakistan came into being. Afterwards he learnt enough Bengali to conduct weekly "Dharma" in it and he even wrote some Bengali poetry. But his mastery over the Bengali language was not equal to that of the English.

Dinendra Kumar asked him one day "why are you not so well-known—i.e. why do you not come forward—in the life of Baroda ?"

Sri Aurobindo : "There is no happiness or delight in it."

D.K. Roy found books coming by Railway parcels, and saw French, German, Latin, Greek, even Russian, books in his shelf. He saw all the poets from Chaucer to Swinburne in his library. He was immensely surprised to find that in spite of his prolonged residence in England there was no trace of any deep European influence on him.

D.K. Roy writes about the economic condition : "He was alone, he did not know what it was to run after pleasures, he never spent even a pie in the wrong way, and yet at the end of month he had not a farthing in his hand."[1]

Dinendra Kumar Roy in his book thus describes the impression he had of Sri Aurobindo during his stay at Baroda :

[1] See statement by R.N. Patkar of Baroda.

"Sri Aurobindo is not a man of this earth; he is a God sent down by some curse."

Among the subjects on which Sri Aurobindo wrote poems D.K.Roy mentions "Savitri"—it may be the first germ of the great poem which ultimately ended in the epic.

A Bengali painter, Shashi Kumar Hesh, came to Baroda during this period. He prepared a portrait of Sri Aurobindo in oil colours.

1899

Prof. Littledale went on leave. Sri Aurobindo was apppointed professor of English in addition to French. Sri Aurobindo spoke on "Oxford and Cambridge" on the occasion of the Baroda College Social gathering.[1]

During these years (early years of service at Baroda) Sri Aurobindo used to pass his vacations in Bengal especially the second vacation which generally coincided with the Pooja Holidays. The vacations used to be :

I. From 15th April to 9th June.

II. From 30th September to 31st December.

Basanti (Sri Aurobindo's cousin, daughter of Krishna Kumar Mitter) has given her reminiscences (in "Galpa Bharati", Paush) of Sri Aurobindo's visits to Deoghar. She was then a girl learning at school and used to go to Deoghar to visit Rajnarayan's family. There were hills around and everybody enjoyed a life free from conventions of the city. All children used to be fond of Jogendra Mama, sit round him and listen to stories or make fun. Sri Aurobindo liked Jogendra whom he used to call humorously "the prophet of Isabgul" because he used to prescribe "Isabgul" as a remedy for almost all troubles of the stomach !

Sri Aurobindo used to join them all in Pooja Holidays. He generally stayed at Deoghar and passed a few days with his aunt at Calcutta.

Basanti Devi says, "Auro Dada used to arrive with two or three trunks and we always thought it would contain costly suits and

[1] See Appendix for the speech.

other articles of luxury like scents etc. When he opened them I used to look at them and wonder ! What is this ! A few ordinary clothes and all the rest books and nothing but books! Does Auro Dada like to read all these. We all want to chat and enjoy in our vacations, does he want to spend even this time in reading these books ?

But because he liked this reading it was not that he did not join us in our talks and chats and our merry making. His talk used to be full of wit and humour."

Sri Aurobindo : "I was not so (like his brother Mono Mohan Ghose) conscious as a professor."

"I never used to look at the texts and sometimes my explanations did not agree with the notes at all. I was professor of English and sometimes of French. What was surprising to me was that students used to take down everything verbatim and mug it up by heart. Such a thing would never have happened in England.

There (at Baroda) the students besides taking my notes used to get notes of some professors from Bombay especially if he was an examiner.

Once I was giving a lecture on Southey's "Life of Nelson". My lecture was not in agreement with the notes. So the students remarked that it was not at all like what is found in the notes. I replied that : "I have not read the notes—in any case they are all rubbish !" I could never go to the minute details. I read and left my mind to do what it could. That is why I could never become a Scholar. Upto the age of 15 I was known as a very promising scholar in St. Paul's. After 15 I lost that reputation. The teachers used to say that I had become lazy and was deteriorating—because I was reading novels and poetry only, at examination time I used to prepare a little. But now and then when I wrote Greek and Latin verse my teachers used to lament that I was not utilising my remarkable gifts because of my laziness.

When I went up for Scholarship at the King's College, Cambridge, Oscar Browning remarked that he had not seen before such remarkable papers."

29-12-1938

1899

September 1899 Rajnarayan Bose, the grand father, died. Sri Aurobindo wrote a poem after his death.

1899 (1898 ?)

Jatindranath Banerjee (afterwards Niralamb Swamy) came to Baroda to get military training in the Baroda army in order to prepare himself for the Revolutionary work. Sri Aurobindo with the help of Khasirao Jadhav and Madhav Rao got him admitted in the army for training. He was declared as a U.P. man,—not a Bengali. Sri Aurobindo persuaded him to join the Revolutionary movement he intended to launch in Bengal. Jatin agreed.

1900

Principal Tait proposed to the Maharaja to appoint Sri Aurobindo as permanent professor of English in the Baroda College. He spoke highly of his work and ability in his proposal. The Maharaja granted the request. Pay Rs. 360/-. Unlike his brother Mono Mohan (also a professor in English) Sri Aurobindo never prepared himself for the class with elaborate notes.

1900

Jatin Banerjee was sent to Calcutta to get men and materials for the Revolutionary work in Bengal. He met P. Mitter and Bibhuti Bhushan Bhattacharya and introduced them to Sri Aurobindo.

Barin passed his Entrance Examination this year. He spent six months with Mono Mohan at Dacca and then tried to learn agriculture but he got no monitary support. He tried to run a tea-shop in Patna but there also he did not succeed and so he went to Baroda to stay with Sri Aurobindo.

1901

Sri Aurobindo was for sometime in the Revenue Department. He continued to be the President of College Union and Debating Society.

1901 April

Sri Aurobindo advertised for marriage :

Marriage, with Mrinalini Bose, daughter of Bhupal Chandra Bose; age 14 years. Birthday 6th March 1888. He had many prospective offers from which he selected Mrinalini Bose. Principal Girish Chandra Bose, a friend of Bhupal Chandra Bose, arranged this match. Place of marriage : Baithak Khana Road, in one of the houses belonging to Hatkhola Dutt family. As Sri Aurobindo had gone to England the question of purificatory rite was raised. Sri Aurobindo flatly refused even as his father Dr. K.D.Ghose had in his days. At last there was a proposal of shaving the head ! When that was turned down an obliging Brahmin priest satisfied all the requirements of the Shastra for monitary consideration !

Byomkesh Chakravarty, Lord Sinha, Sir and Lady Jagadish Chandra Bose attended the marriage. The marriage was performed according to Hindu rites. The bride was given away by the uncle. Sri Aurobindo was 29 years.

Whenever Sri Aurobindo passed through Calcutta during this period befor 1906 he used to stay with Krishna Kumar Mitter at No. 8 College Square.

1901

It was most probably during this year that Mr. Mandavle, a Marathi Gentleman, gave the oath of the Revolutionary Party to Sri Aurobindo. This ceremony was considered important at that time.

Sri Aurobindo went to Deoghar after his marriage. From there Mrinalini, Sarojini and himself went to Naini Tal (28.5.1901) (There is a letter—a post card—written by Sri Aurobindo to Bhuvan Chakravarty dated 28.5.1901)

1901 May

Copy of the post card written by Sri Aurobindo to Bhuvan Chakravarty ;

Dear Bhuvan Babu,

I have been here at Naini Tal with my wife and sister since the 29th of May. The place is a beautiful one, but not half so cold as I expected. In fact, in daytime it is only a shade less hot than Baroda except when it has been raining. The Maharaja will probably be leaving here on the 24th,—if there has been rain at Baroda, but as he will stop at Agra, Mathura and Mhow he will not reach Baroda before the beginning of July. I shall probably be going separately and may also reach on the 1st of July. If you like, you might go there a little before and put up with Deshpande. I have asked Madhavrao to get my new house furnished but I don't know what he is doing in that direction.

Banerji is, I believe, in Calcutta. He came up to see me at Deoghar for a day.

Yours sincerely,
Aurobindo Ghose

One day Sri Aurobindo found Barin at Baroda even before he had got up from his bed. He found him with a dirty canvass bag and very dirty clothes. He exclaimed "How is that, you are here, in this state ?" He sent him straight to the bath room ! At this time there were four members of the family at Baroda : Sri Aurobindo, Sarojini, Mrinalini and Barin.

Even before 1901 whenever Sri Aurobindo used to go to Deoghar he used to inculcate the revolutionary spirit in Barin. When he came to Baroda it was an opportunity to prepare him for the Revolutionary work.

1901

During his stay at Baroda Barin read some book on spiritualism and began experimenting with Planchette. The replies were received by tappings on the table. Sri Aurobindo also used to join in the evenings. One or two experiences are remarkable:

1. Once Barin called Dr. K.D.Ghose, their father. The reply came that he was there. He was asked to give sign or proof of his identity. He reminded Barin about a gold watch which he had presented to him, Barin had completely forgotten this fact but

said it was true. Then he was asked to give other proof. He then mentioned the existence of a certain picture of the wall in the house of Mr. Devdhar who was an engineer. An enquiry was made when no such picture was found. The matter was reported to the Spirit that claimed to be that of Dr. K.D.Ghose. In reply he said that they should enquire again. Then they made another effort, a more detailed effort, and found that there was a picture which had been covered over by the white-wash.

2. In another scene Tilak was present. The Spirit of Dr. K.D.Ghose was called and asked "what kind of man is this ? (Mr. Tilak)". He answered : "When all your work will be ruined and many men will bow their heads down, this man will keep his head erect". It was, and proved, true.

Once Ramkrishna Paramhansa was called and was asked questions. But he kept silent for a long time. Then while going he said "Make a temple", "Make a temple" ("Mandir gado").

At that time the idea of independence for India was dominant and so all believed that Ramkrishna gave his consent to the "Bhavani Mandir" scheme. The true significance of it Sri Aurobindo interpreted after years as his command to make in ourselves a temple for the Mother, to effect such a transformation of ourself that we become the temple of the Mother.

These seances have not much value from the point of view of Yoga. But they indicate the limitation of the view that the physical is the only real. Their importance lies in the fact that they showed Sri Aurobindo the existence of supra-physical agencies and planes of consciousness, and the possibility of attaining them.

Sri Aurobindo kept a horse carriage at Baroda. For the description of it one can read D.K. Roy's book, "Sri Aurobindo Prasanga".

There was an incident which is important : Once Sri Aurobindo was going in his carriage from the Camp Road towards the city. Just by the side of the Public gardens an accident was narrowly averted. As he saw the possibility of the accident he found that with the will to prevent it there appeared a Being of Light in him who was as it were the master of the situation and able to control the details. This experience was previous to the beginning of his Sadhana.

7-1-1940

"My Uncle's daughter was on the point of death by typhoid. Doctors gave up all hope and said the only thing is to pray. Then they prayed and after prayer they found that her consciousness had returned !"

Another instance is that of Madhav Rao's son who was dying at Navsari. The doctors gave up hope. Madhav Rao wired them to stop medicine and pray to God. When they prayed the boy was cured. I knew the case myself. Madhav Rao showed me the telegrams.

1902

Teaching of French and English in the college. Southey's "Life of Nelson" and Burke's "Reflections of the French Revolution", text books in the first two classes.

Sarat Chandra Mallick's lecture in the college, Sri Aurobindo presided.

In this year he went to Midnapure for the first time during vacation. He met there Hemchandra Das. Practice of Rifle shooting on his lands. Resolution to form six centres of Revolutionary work in Bengal. Jatin Banerjee and Barin accompanied him to Midnapur. Jatin had already started the organisation. At Calcutta he had started an organisation of young men in the compound of P. Mitter. When Sri Aurobindo went to Calcutta Jatin arranged interview between the two. Sri Aurobindo gave the oath of revolutionary party to P. Mitter.

It was mainly for the revolutionary work that Sri Aurobindo was visiting Bengal during these years.

He went to Midnapur for the second time and gave the oath to Hemchandra Das with sword and Gita in the hand. The content of the oath was to secure the freedom of Mother India at any cost and not to declare the secret of the Society to any one outside.

The idea of forming Secret Revolutionary Societies was in the air in Bengal for a long time. Even Rajnarayan Bose, his grand father, had begun a society which Tagore had joined when he

was young ! But these efforts did not result in any achievement. There was a secret society in Maharashtra presided over by Thakur Ramsingh, Rajput prince. The Bombay branch was managed by a council of five. Sri Aurobindo managed to contact this body and joined it. This was after he had already started his activity in Bengal.

During this year (1902) a society was started at Deoghar under Satyen Bose.

The revolutionary spirit was so rampant that even Government servants were sympathetic to it and men like Jogendranath Mukherji, a magistrate, actively joined the movement.

From 28-4-1902 to 29-5-1902 Sri Aurobindo was on privilege leave. He prepared the administrative report of the Baroda State. There was an increment in the pay.

Sister Nivedita came to Baroda this year. She had identified herself with the political ideology of Vivekananda. She had an ardent aspiration for India's freedom. She had ultimately to sever her connection with the Ramkrishna Mission on account of her political activity.

The relation of Sister Nivedita and Sri Aurobindo has not been well-known and many conjectures, hearsays, and rumours have been current in the Indian press. We give here in Sri Aurobindo's own words the truth of the matter. "Then about my relation with Sister Nivedita—they were purely in the field of politics. Spirituality or spiritual matter did not enter into them and I do not remember anything passing between us on these subjects when I was with her. Once or twice she showed the spiritual side of her but she was then speaking to some one else who had come to see her while I was there."

Sep. 13. 1946

"I met Sister Nivedita first at Baroda when she came to give some lectures there. I went to receive her at the station and take her to the house asigned to her; I also accompanied her to an interview she had sought with the Maharaja of Baroda. She had heard of me as one who believed in strength and was worshipper of Kali by which she meant she had heard of me as a revolutionary. I knew of her already because I had read (?) and admired her book "Kali

the Mother". It is in these days that we formed a friendship. After I had started my revolutionary work in Bengal through certain emissaries, I went there personally to see and arrange things myself. I found a number of small groups of revolutionaries that had recently sprung into existence but all scattered and acting without reference to each other. I tried to unite them under a single organisation with the Barrister P.Mitra as the leader of revolution in Bengal and a central council of five persons, one of them being Nivedita".

Sep. 13. 1946

"I had no occasion to meet Nivedita after that until I settled in Bengal as Principal of the National College and the chief editorial writer of the Bandemataram. By that time I had become one of the leaders of the public movement known first as extremism, then as nationalism, but this gave me no occasion to meet her except once or twice at the Congress, as my collaboration with her was solely in the secret revolutionary field. I was busy with my work and she with hers and no occasion arose for consultation or decisions about the conduct of the revolutionary movement. Later on, I began to make time to go and see her occasionally at Bagbazar.".

Sep. 13. 1946

"In one of these visits she informed me that the Government had decided to deport me and she wanted me to go into secracy or to leave British India and act from outside so as to avoid interruption of my work. There was no question at that time of danger to her, in spite of her political views, she had friendly relations with high Government officials and there was no question of her arrest. I told her that I did not think it necessary to accept her suggestion; I would write an open letter in the Karmayogin which I thought would prevent this action by the Government. This was done and on my next visit to her, she told me that my move had been entirely suceessful and that the idea of deportation had been dropped. The departure to Chandernagore happened later and there was no connection between the two incidents which have been hopelessly confused together in the account in the book."

Sep. 13. 1946

In her interview she pressed the Maharaja to join and help the Revolutionary movement. The Maharaja did not commit himself and merely said that he would send his reply through Sri Aurobindo which he never did. He said so only to evade the question. But he was surprised to find that Sri Aurobindo was taking such keen interest in the movement.

Most probably it was during this year (1902 ?) that Barin was sent to Calcutta to help Jatin Banerjee. Barin had been staying at Baroda since 1901. The work at Calcutta was begun at 106, Upper Circular Road. Jatin, Barin and Abinash were the workers. Jatin used to work among the educated classes—pleaders, doctors etc,—Barin and Abinash among college students. Wherever they found an open ground they tried to organise young men there and teach them lathi play, fencing and even riding. Having worked together for six months they separated. Barin and Abinash shifted to Madan Mitter Lane and Jatin moved to Sitaram Ghose Street.

1903

From 22. 2. 1903 to 21. 3. 1903 Sri Aurobindo took one month's leave. He was called by Maharaja to accompany him on his trip to Kashmere. From 22. 3. 1903 to 15. 4. 1903 he took extra French classes at home to make up for the loss of lessons due to his going on leave.

1903. April he went to Kashmere with the Maharaja. The principal made a strong report against his absence in the College during current term and on the opening of the College an explanation was asked by the Diwan from Sri Aurobindo who was on tour. The explanation he offered was the following :

1. A letter was sent to the Principal which does not seem to have been received by him.

2. Before going to Kashmere he was called away by the Maharaja on urgent and important work.

3. "I was taking classes in the afternoon at my house as three quarters of an hour in the morning was insufficient. I was always in the habit of making my own arrangements with the students which was the more necessary as I had several branches of work to attend to !"

Dated 4. 6. 1903

This explanation was sent from the tour and so he ended the note by saying "As I am with the Maharaja at present, please note that I shall not be able to take the classes in the second term." Pay this year was Rs. 450/-.

The Rowlett Committee report mentions a revolutionary booklet Bhavani Mandir . It was written by Sri Aurobindo. A temple of Mother India was to be located some where in the forest or on some mountain top where workers who would dedicate themselves, in the spirit of complete renunciation, to the freedom of India were to be prepared. Others who could rise to that pitch of renunciation of everything were to help these political Sannyasins in other ways. It is possible that the basic conception of this scheme may have been derived from "Ananda Math" of Bankim.[1]

We have mentioned before that Sri Aurobindo was on leave from 22. 2. 1903 to 21. 3. 1903. The reason for his leave was to patch differences that had arisen between Jatin Banerjee and Barin at Calcutta. It appears that Jatin after his military training at Baroda had become a kind of strict disciplinarian and insisted on imposing discipline on the young men in the organisation. Barin was not capable of working under anyone except the top-most leaders. Jatin became unpopular because of his strictness. One may say, there was rivalry between the two for leadership. Sri Aurobindo stayed this time with Jogendra Vidya Bhushan who was a Government servant and a sympathiser of the Revolutionary movement. Deva Vrata, Suresh Samajpati were on Barin's side. Even Hemchandra Das was for Barin. Hemchandra Das writes (in his book) "He (Jatin) had an intense desire for doing work. He was besides a military man. For a Bengali this fact of becoming a military man is such an unimaginable thing that his temper was that of "general". Jatin used to exercise his generalship fully upon his young men."

Sri Aurobindo heard both the sides and gave his ruling that Jatin must continue to work. The final authority was not to be vested in either Jatin or Barin but in a committee of five members including P. Mitter and Sister Nivedita. It should be noted here that the differences were not really removed and occasional bickerings

[1] See the Bhavani Mandir—reproduced.

continued. Sri Aurobindo did not take interest in the affair. He met the members only on occasions of work.

Sri Aurobindo writes about this work: "The work under P. Mitter spread enormously and finally contained tens of thousands of young men and the spirit of revolution (?) spread by Barin's paper "Yugantar" became general in the young generation but during my absence at Baroda, the council ceased to exist as it was impossible to keep up agreement among the many groups".

It was in this year (1903) that Sri Aurobindo met Abinash Bhattacharya for the first time. It was when Sri Aurobindo came to settle the difference that Abinash got the opportunity of seeing Sri Aurobindo.

This is how he describes it: "Sri Aurobindo and Jatin were sitting and talking together (in Jatin's house) when Barin brought me up to Sri Aurobindo". He was given the oath. The act of Partition of Bengal was being passed in the legislature. Sri Aurobindo said to the three who were present "this is a very fine opportunity. Carry the antipartition agitation powerfully. We will get many workers for the movement".

Sri Aurobindo wrote a pamphlet under the caption "No Compromise" at this time. No press in Calcutta was willing to print it! At last Abinash got it composed in his house by Kulkarni, a Maratha revolutionary, and at night got many copies printed (a few thousands) and freely distributed it.

When Sri Aurobindo was on tour in Kashmere he visited Takhat-i-Suleman or what is known as the "hill of Shankaracharya". There without any effort Sri Aurobindo experienced the vacant Infinite in a very tangible way and the experience left a deep impression upon his mind.

1904

Sep. 28th he was appointed vice-principal of the college, pay Rs. 550/- per month. He was very popular with the students and the Principal also liked him very much. The Maharaja had kept a provision for his personal work even while he made this permanent appointment.

The one important work which the Maharaja got him to do

Sri Aurobindo
(*College Professor, Baroda*)

this year was to prepare a precis of the long drawn out Bapat case. Sri Aurobindo was called to Ooty for this purpose during the vacation.

Sri Aurobindo met Charu Chandra Dutt I.C.S. who was working at Thana. The Bhavani Mandir scheme was explained to him and he joined the revolutionary party.

During this year (1904) in the month of September Sri Aurobindo again passed through Thana, met Sri Charu Chandra Dutt and discussed the Bhavani Mandir scheme with Haribhau Modak, editor of Rastramat, Kaka Saheb Patil, a pleader of Vasai and one or two other men. Their view point was that the spiritual element should be left out and the political side should be stressed—material side such as bombs and pistols should be gathered.

It was during this year that Sri Aurobindo began yoga somewhat seriously. He consulted Engineer Devdhar who was a disciple of Swami Brahmanand of Chandod, for details of Pranayams. There was a current idea also that yoga cannot be done without Pranayam. He describes the results as follows :

"My own experience is that the brain becomes Prakashmaya —full of light. When I was practising Pranayama at Baroda, I used to do it for five to six hours in the day, three hours in the morning and two in the evening. The mind worked with great illumination and power. At that time I used to write poetry. Usually I wrote five to eight or ten lines per day, about two hundred lines in a month. After the Pranayama I could write two hundred lines within half an hour. Formerly my memory was dull, but afterwards when the inspiration came, I could remember the lines in their order and write them down conveniently at any time. Along with this enhanced mental activity I could see an electric energy all around the brain."

In another letter he refers to this in the following terms :— "After four years of Pranayam and other practices of my own, with no other result than increased health and outflow of energy, some psycho-physical phenomena, a great outflow of poetic creation, a limited power of subtle sight (luminous patterns and figures etc.) mostly with the waking eye, I had a complete arrest etc." (May 1932.)

During the period of the beginning of his sadhana he used to see things on the subtle planes as mentioned in the letter above. He describes how he began to see inwardly :—

"I remember when I first began to see inwardly (and outwardly also with the open eye), a scientific friend of mine began to talk of "after-images" they are only after-images ! I asked him whether after-images remained before the eye for two minutes at a time. "No", to his knowledge only for a few seconds ; I also asked him whether one could get after-images of things not around one or even not existing upon the earth, since they had other shapes, another character, other hues, contours and very different dynamism, life-movements and values—he could not reply in the affirmative. That is how these so-called scientific explanations break down as soon as you pull them out of their cloudland of mental theory and face them with the actual phenomena they pretend to decipher". (19-2-1932)

It was during his stay at Baroda that Sri Aurobindo had personal experience of Narayana Jyotishi who without any reference to the horoscope foretold his three political trials and also his release by saying that he would come to trouble while fighting against "white enemies". At that time Sri Aurobindo had not seriously thought of taking up political activity.

Barin accompanied Sri Aurobindo from Deoghar to Baroda. He went away into the Vindhya mountains to search for a "place far away from the atmosphere of cities, into solitude, to find a peaceful and ennobling atmosphere" to establish there the temple of Mother India. He came back with a kind of very persistent mountain fever !

Barin was being treated, but was not cured. When a Naga Sannyasi came who on knowing about Barin's illness asked for a glass full of water, made a cross cut in the air above the water, repeating a Mantra and gave him to drink. Barin was cured of the fever. Sri Aurobindo had a direct proof of the powers of yoga and also of its utility.

"I first knew about Yogic cure from a Naga Sadhu or Sannyasi. Barin had mountain fever when he was wandering in the

Amarkantak. He took a cup of water and cut it into four by making two crosses and asked him to drink it saying he won't have fever tomorrow. And the fever left him".

In the year (1904 and also 1905) Sri Aurobindo stayed in Calcutta, Grey Street, when he went during vacations. Barin did the cooking and Devabrata later Swami Prajnananda, used to come and go i.e. stay irregularly with him. All those who were to be recruited to the revolutionary organisation used to come to this Grey Street house and meet either Barin, Jatin or Devabrata. Sri Aurobindo used to meet only those who were of importance. They used to survey the day's work and exchange ideas at meal time. This was recruiting work. It had begun from 1899-1900. But Sri Aurobindo wanted to remain in the back-ground and work. He had an aversion to come out before the public.

During this year revolutionary centres, not altogether well organised but loose, were started at Khulna, Rangpur, Midnapur, Dacca etc.

Points from the Statement of Sj. R.N. Patkar, advocate, Baroda are reproduced here to give an idea of Sri Aurobindo's life at Baroda.

In these days he did not take any cooked food in the evening but used to take fruit—mostly plantains,—and a cup of milk. This kind of austere life continued to the day he left Baroda (i.e. 1906)

When I came to Baroda I was a mere lad hardly sixteen in age and so was not in a position to judge things properly. However, I note down a few points that struck me during my contact.

Sri Aurobindo was very simple in his mode of living. He was not at all fastidious in his tastes. He did not care much for food or dress because he never attached any importance to them. He never visited the market for his dress. At home he was clad in plain white sadara and dhoti and outside invariably in white drill suits. He never slept on a soft cotton bed—as most of us do—but on a bed of coir,—coconut fibres—on which was spread a Malabar grass mat which served as a bedsheet.

Once I asked him why he used such a coarse and hard bed to which he replied with his characteristic smile : "Don't you know, my boy, that I am a Brahmachari ? Our Shastras enjoin that a Brahmachari should not use soft bed".

Another thing I observed about him was the total absence of love for money. He used to get the lump-sum of three month's pay in a bag which he emptied in a tray lying on his table. He never bothered to keep money in a safe box under lock and key. He did not keep account of what he spent. One day I casually asked him why he was keeping his money like that. He laughed and then replied : "Well, it is a proof that we are living in the midst of honest and good people". "But you never keep an account which may testify to the honesty of people around you" ? I asked him.

Then with a serene face he said: "It is God who keeps account for me. He gives me as much as I want and keeps the rest to Himself. At any rate He does not keep me in want, then why should I worry?"

He used to be absorbed in reading to the extent that he was at times oblivious of things around him. One evening the servant brought his meal and put the dishes on the table and informed him : "Sab, Khana rakha hai"—"Master, the meal is served". He simply said "Achha"—"all right", without even moving his head. After about an hour the servant returned to remove the dishes and found to his surprise the dishes untouched on the table ! He dared not disturb his master and so quietly came to me and told me about it. I had to go to his room and remind him of the waiting meals. He gave a smile, went to the table and finished his meals in a short time and resumed his reading.

I had the good fortune to be his student when I was in the Intermediate Class. His method of teaching was a novel one. In the beginning he used to give a series of introductory lectures in order to initiate the students into the subject matter of the text. After that he used to read the text, stopping where necessary to explain the meaning of difficult words and sentences. He ended by giving general lectures bearing on the various aspects of the subject matter of the text.

But more than his College lectures it was a treat to hear him on the platform. He used to preside occasionally over the meetings of the College debating Society. The large central hall of the College used to be full when he was to speak. He was not an orator but was a speaker of a very high order and he was listened to with rapt attention, without any gesture or movements of the limbs he stood motionless and language flowed like a stream from his lips with natural ease and melody that kept the audience spell-bound.... Though it is more than fifty years since I heard him I shall remember his figure and the metallic ring of his melodious voice.

On one occasion I happened to speak to him about great men of Bengal. I mentioned Romesh Chandra Dutt as a great poet, as he had translated the Ramayana and the Mahabharata in English poetry.

Sri Aurobindo said : "Do you consider Romesh Dutt a poet ? No, you can call him a rhymist at the most, not a poet. All those who write verses are not poets. Even a prose writer can be a poet if he has the poetic gift."

On the day of his departure from Baroda he called me to his room and told me affectionately to be good and faithful to the dictates of my conscience. Then he went straight to his bookcase and knowing my love for Sanskrit picked up Kalidas's Shakuntala and Vikramorvasi and presented them to me as a token of his love. He also gave his book of poems : *Songs to Myrtilla* and translation of Vikramorvasie. Though I am old now I still remember the parting scene with a heavy heart.

R. N. PATKAR

Baroda 30th Sept. 1956

"In the beginning of 1905 Sri Aurobindo, Deshpande and Khasirao were meeting in the evenings when Barin carried the planchette. Once they met successively for three days. On the fourth day I asked Barin what the matter was. He told me without the least hesitation that a message from the Goddess has been received with detailed directions which after being pu in a readable form will

be printed under the title 'Bhavani Mandir'. It was for private circulation only".

R. N. PATKAR
Advocate, Baroda

30th Sep. 1956

BHAWANI MANDIR[1]

OM

Namas Chandikayai

A temple is to be erected and consecrated to Bhawani, the mother, among the hills. To all the children of the mother the call is sent forth to help in the sacred work.

Who is Bhawani ?

Who is Bhawani, the mother, and why should we erect a temple to her ?

Bhawani is the Infinite Energy

In the unending revolutions of the world, as the wheel of the Eternal turns mightily in its courses, the Infinite Energy, which streams forth from the Eternal and sets the wheel to work, looms up in the vision of man in various aspects and infinite forms. Each aspect creates and marks an age. Sometimes She is Love, sometimes She is Knowledge, sometimes She is Renunciation, sometimes She is Pity. This Infinite Energy is Bhawani, She also is Durga, She is Kali, She is Radha the Beloved, She is Lakshmi, She is our Mother and the Creatress of us all.

Bhawani is Shakti

In the present age, the Mother is manifested as the mother of Strength. She is pure Shakti.

[1] Written by Sri Aurobindo and circulated during the Bengal-partition days in the early years of this Century. These MSS. were recovered only recently.—Editor.

The Whole World is Growing full of the Mother as Shakti

Let us raise our eyes and cast them upon the world around us. Wherever we turn our gaze, huge masses of strength rise before our vision, tremendous, swift and inexorable forces, gigantic figures of energy, terrible sweeping columns of force. All is growing large and strong. The Shakti of war, the Shakti of wealth, the Shakti of Science are tenfold more mighty and colossal, a hundredfold more fierce, rapid and busy in their activity, a thousandfold more prolific in resources, weapons and instruments than ever before in recorded history. Everywhere the Mother is at work; from Her mighty and shaping hands enormous forms of Rakshasas, Asuras, Devas are leaping forth into the arena of the world. We have seen the slow but mighty rise of great empires in the West, we have seen the swift, irresistible and impetuous bounding into life of Japan. Some are Mleccha Shaktis clouded in their strength, black or bloodcrimson with tamas or rajas, others are Arya Shaktis, bathed in a pure flame of renunciation and utter self-sacrifice: but all are the Mother in Her new phase, remoulding, creating. She is pouring her spirit into the old; She is whirling into life the new.

We in India Fail in all Things for Want of Shakti

But in India the breath moves slowly, the afflatus is long in coming. India, the ancient mother, is indeed striving to be reborn, striving with agony and tears, but she strives in vain. What ails her, she who is after all so vast and might be so strong? There is surely some enormous defect, something vital is wanting in us, nor is it difficult to lay our finger on the spot. We have all things else, but we are empty of strength, void of energy. We have abandoned Shakti and are therefore abandoned by Shakti. The Mother is not in our hearts, in our brains, in our arms.

The wish to be reborn we have in abundance, there is no deficiency there. How many attempts have been made, how many movements have been begun, in religion, in society, in politics! But the same fate has overtaken or is preparing to overtake them all. They flourish for a moment, then the impulse wanes, the fire

dies out, and if they endure, it is only as empty shells, forms from which the Brahma has gone or in which it lies overpowered with tamas and inert. Our beginnings are mighty, but they have neither sequel nor fruit.

Now we are beginning in another direction; we have started a great industrial movement which is to enrich and regenerate an impoverished land. Untaught by experience, we do not perceive that this movement must go the way of all the others, unless we first seek the one essential thing, unless we acquire strength.

Our Knowledge is a Dead Thing for Want of Shakti

Is it knowledge that is wanting? We Indians, born and bred in a country where Jnana has been stored and accumulated since the race began, bear about in us the inherited gains of many thousands of years. Great giants of knowledge rise among us even today to add to the store. Our capacity has not shrunk, the edge of our intellect has not been dulled or blunted, its receptivity and flexibility are as varied as of old. But it is a dead knowledge, a burden under which we are bowed, a poison which is corroding us, rather than as it should be a staff to support our feet and a weapon in our hands; for this is the nature of all great things that when they are not used or are ill used, they turn upon the bearer and destroy him.

Our knowledge then, weighed down with a heavy load of tamas, lies under the curse of impotence and inertia. We choose to fancy indeed, now-a-days, that if we acquire Science, all will be well. Let us first ask ourselves what we have done with the knowledge we already possess, or what have those who have already acquired Science been able to do for India. Imitative and incapable of initiative, we have striven to copy the methods of England, and we had not the strength; we would now copy the methods of the Japanese, a still more energetic people; are we likely to succeed any better? The mighty force of knowledge which European Science bestows is a weapon for the hands of a giant, it is the mace of Bheemsen; what can a weakling do with it but crush himself in the attempt to wield it?

Our Bhakti cannot Live and Work for Want of Shakti

Is it love, enthusiasm, Bhakti that is wanting ? These are ingrained in the Indian nature, but in the absence of Shakti we cannot concentrate, we cannot direct, we cannot even preserve it. Bhakti is the leaping flame, Shakti is the fuel. If the fuel is scanty how long can the fire endure ?

When the strong nature, enlightened by knowledge, disciplined and given a giant's strength by Karma, lifts itself up in love and adoration to God, that is the Bhakti which endures and keeps the soul for ever united with the Divine. But the weak nature is too feeble to bear the impetus of so mighty a thing as perfect Bhakti ; he is lifted up for a moment, then the flame soars up to Heaven, leaving him behind exhausted and even weaker than before. Every movement of any kind of which enthusiasm and adoration are the life must fail and soon burn itself out so long as the human material from which it proceeds is frail and light in substance.

India Therefore Needs Shakti Alone

The deeper we look, the more we shall be convinced that the one thing wanting, which we must strive to acquire before all others, is strength—strength physical, strength mental, strength moral, but above all strength spiritual which is the one inexhaustible and imperishable source of all the others. If we have strength everything else will be added to us easily and naturally. In the absence of strength we are like men in a dream who have hands but cannot seize or strike, who have feet but cannot run.

India, Grown Old and Decrepit in Will, has to be Reborn

Whenever we strive to do anything, after the first rush of enthusiasm is spent a paralysing helplessness seizes upon us. We often see in the cases of old men full of years and experience that the very excess of knowledge seems to have frozen their powers of action and their powers of will. When a great feeling or a great need overtakes them and it is necessary to carry out its promptings in action, they hesitate, ponder, discuss, make tentative efforts

and abandon them or wait for the safest and easiest way to suggest itself, instead of taking the most direct; thus the time when it was possible and necessary to act passes away. Our race has grown just such an old man with stores of knowledge, with ability to feel and desire, but paralysed by senile sluggishness, senile timidity, senile feebleness. If India is to survive, she must be made young again. Rushing and billowing streams of energy must be poured into her; her soul must become, as it was in the old times, like the surges, vast, puissant, calm or turbulent at will, an ocean of action or of force.

India can be Reborn

Many of us, utterly overcome by tamas, the dark and heavy demon of inertia, are saying now-a-days that it is impossible, that India is decayed, bloodless and lifeless, too weak ever to recover; that our race is doomed to extinction. It is a foolish and idle saying. No man or nation need be weak unless he chooses, no man or nation need perish unless he deliberately chooses extinction.

What is a Nation? the Shakti of its Millions

For what is a nation? What is our mother-country? It is not a piece of earth, nor a figure of speech, nor a fiction of the mind. It is a mighty Shakti, composed of the Shaktis of all the millions of units that make up the nation, just as Bhawani Mahisha Mardini sprang into being from the Shakti of all the millions of gods assembled in one mass of force and welded into unity. The Shakti we call India, Bhawani Bharati, is the living unity of the Shaktis of three hundred million people; but she is inactive, imprisoned in the magic circle of tamas, the self-indulgent inertia and ignorance of her sons. To get rid of tamas we have but to wake the Brahma within.

It is our Own Choice whether we Create a Nation or Perish

What is it that so many thousands of holy men, Sadhus and Sannyasis, have preached to us silently by their lives? What was

the message that radiated from the personality of Bhagawan Ramkrishna Paramhansa? What was it that formed the kernel of the eloquence with which the lion-like heart of Vivekananda sought to shake the world? It is this, that in every one of these three hundred millions of men, from the Raja on his throne to the coolie at his labour, from the Brahmin absorbed in his Sandhya to the Pariah walking shunned of men, GOD LIVETH. We are all gods and creators, because the energy of God is within us and all life is creation; not only the making of new forms is creation, but preservation is creation, destruction itself is creation. It rests with us what we shall create; for we are not, unless we choose, puppets dominated by Fate and Maya; we are facets and manifestations of Almighty Power.

India Must be Reborn, Because her Rebirth is Demanded by the Future of the World

India cannot perish, our race cannot become extinct, because among all the divisions of mankind it is to India that is reserved the highest and the most splendid destiny, the most essential to the future of the human race. It is she who must send forth from herself the future religion of the entire world, the Eternal religion which is to harmonise all religion, science and philosophies and make mankind one soul. In the sphere of morality, likewise, it is her mission to purge barbarism (mlecchahood) out of humanity and to aryanise the world. In order to do this, she must first rearyanise herself.

It was to initiate this great work, the greatest and most wonderful work ever given to a race, that Bhagawan Ramkrishna came and Vivekananda preached. If the work does not progress as it once promised to do it is because we have once again allowed the terrible cloud of Tamas to settle down on our souls—fear, doubt, hesitation, sluggishness. We have taken, some of us, the Bhakti which poured forth from the one and the Jnana given us by the other, but from lack of Shakti, from the lack of Karma, we have not been able to make our Bhakti a living thing. May we yet remember that it was Kali, who is Bhawani, Mother of strength whom Ramakrishna worshipped and with whom he became one.

But the destiny of India will not wait on the falterings and failings of individuals; the Mother demands that men shall arise to institute Her worship and make it universal.

To get Strength we must Adore The Mother of Strength

Strength then and again strength and yet more strength is the need of our race. But if it is strength we desire, how shall we gain it if we do not adore the Mother of strength ? She demands worship not for Her own sake, but in order that She may help us and give Herself to us. This is no fantastic idea, no superstition but the ordinary law of the universe. The gods cannot, if they would, give themselves unasked. Even the Eternal comes not unaware upon men. Every devotee knows by experience that we must turn to Him and desire and adore Him before the Divine Spirit pours in its ineffable beauty and ecstasy upon the soul. What is true of the Eternal, is true also of Her who goes forth from Him.

Religion the True Path

Those who, possessed with Western ideas, look askance at any return to the old sources of energy may well consider a few fundamental facts.

The Example of Japan

I. There is no instance in history of a more marvellous and sudden up-surging of strength in a nation than modern Japan. All sorts of theories had been started to account for the uprising, but now intellectual Japanese are telling us what were the fountains of that mighty awakening, the sources of that inexhaustible strength. They were drawn from religion. It was the Vedantic teachings of Oyomei and the recovery of Shintoism with its worship of the national Shakti of Japan in the image and person of the Mikado that enabled the little island empire to wield the stupendous weapons of Western knowledge and science as lightly and invincibly as Arjun wielded the Gandiv.

India's Greater Need of Spiritual Regeneration

II. India's need of drawing from the fountains of religion is far greater than was ever Japan's; for the Japanese had only to revitalise and perfect a strength that already existed. We have to create strength where it did not exist before; we have to change our natures, and become new men with new hearts, to be born again. There is no scientific process, no machinery for that. Strength can only be created by drawing it from the internal and inexhaustible reservoirs of the Spirit, from that Adya-Shakti of the Eternal which is the fountain of all new existence. To be born again means nothing but to revive the Brahma within us, and that is a spiritual process —no effort of the body or the intellect can compass it.

Religion the Path Natural to the National Mind

III. All great awakenings in India, all her periods of mightiest and most varied vigour have drawn their vitality from the fountain-heads of some deep religious awakening. Wherever the religious awakening has been complete and grand, the national energy it has created has been gigantic and puissant; wherever the religious movement has been narrow or incomplete, the national movement has been broken, imperfect or temporary. The persistence of this phenomenon is proof that it is ingrained in the temperament of the race. If you try other and foreign methods we shall either gain our end with tedious slowness, painfully and imperfectly, or we shall not attain it at all. Why abandon the plain way which God and the Mother have marked out for you, to choose faint and devious paths of your own treading?

The Spirit Within is the True Source of Strength

IV. The Brahma within, the one and indivisible ocean of spiritual force is that from which all life, material and mental, is drawn. This is beginning to be as much recognised by leading Western thinkers as it was from the old days by the East. If it be so, then spiritual energy is the source of all other strength. There are the fathomless fountain-heads, the deep and inexhaustible

sources. The shallow surface springs are easier to reach, but they soon run dry. Why not then go deep instead of scratching the surface ? The result will repay the labour.

Three Things Needful

We need three things answering to three fundamental laws.

I. Bhakti—the Temple of the Mother

We cannot get strength unless we adore the Mother of Strength.

We will therefore build a temple to the white Bhawani, the Mother of strength, the Mother of India ; and we will build it in a place far from the contamination of modern cities and as yet little trodden by man, in a high and pure air steeped in calm and energy. This temple will be the centre from which Her worship is to flow over the whole country ; for there, worshipped among the hills, She will pass like fire into the brains and hearts of Her Worshippers. This also is what the Mother has commanded.

II.—Karma—A New Order of Brahmacharins

Adoration will be dead and ineffective unless it is transmuted into Karma.

We will therefore have a Math with a new Order of Karma Yogins attached to the temple, men who have renounced all in order to work for the Mother. Some may, if they choose, be complete Sannyasis, most will be Brahmacharis who will return to the Grihasthasram when their allotted work is finished, but all must accept renunciation.

Why ? For Reasons :

1) Because it is only in proportion as we put from us the preoccupation of bodily desires and interests, the sensual gratifications, lusts, longings, indolences of the material world, that we can return to the ocean of spiritual force within us.

2) Because for the development of Shakti, entire concentration is necessary; the mind must be devoted entirely to its aim as a spear is hurled to its mark; if other cares and longings distract the mind, the spear will be carried out from its straight course and miss the target. We need a nucleus of men in whom the Shakti is developed to its uttermost extent, in whom it fills every corner of the personality and overflows to fertilize the earth. These, having the fire of Bhawani in their hearts and brains, will go forth and carry the flame to every nook and cranny of our land.

Jnana, the Great Message

Bhakti and Karma cannot be perfect and enduring unless they are based upon Jnana.

The Brahmacharins of the Order will therefore be taught to fill their souls with knowledge and base their work upon it as upon a rock. What shall be the basis of their knowledge ? What but the great *so-aham*, the mighty formula of the Vedanta, the ancient gospel which has yet to reach the heart of the nation, the knowledge which when vivified by Karma and Bhakti delivers man out of all fear and all weakness.

The Message of the Mother

When, therefore, you ask who is Bhawani the mother, She herself answers you, "I am the Infinite Energy which streams forth from the Eternal in the world and Eternal in yourselves. I am the Mother of the Universe, the Mother of the Worlds, and for you who are children of the Sacred Land, Aryabhumi, made of her clay and reared by her sun and winds, I am Bhawani Bharati, Mother of India."

Then if you ask why we should erect a temple to Bhawani, the Mother, hear Her answer, "Because I have commanded it, and because by making a centre for the future religion you will be furthering the immediate will of the Eternal and storing up merit which will make you strong in this life and great in another. You will be helping to create a nation, to consolidate an age, to aryanise a world. And that nation is your own, that age is the age of your-

selves and your children, that world is no fragment of land bounded by seas and hills, but the whole earth with her teeming millions."

Come then, hearken to the call of the Mother. She is already in our hearts waiting to manifest Herself, waiting to be worshipped,—inactive because the God in us is concealed by tamas, troubled by Her inactivity, sorrowful because Her children will not call on Her to help them. You who feel Her stirring within you, fling off the black veil of self, break down the imprisoning walls of indolence, help Her each as you feel impelled, with your bodies or with your intellect or with your speech or with your wealth or with your prayers and worship each man according to his capacity. Draw not back, for against those who were called and heard Her not She may well be wroth in the day of Her coming; but to those who help Her advent even a little, how radiant with beauty and kindness will be the face of their Mother's.

Appendix

The work and rules of the new Order of Sannyasis will be somewhat as follows :

I. General Rules

1. All who undertake the life of Brahmacharya for the Mother will have to vow themselves to Her service for four years, after which they will be free to continue the work or return to family life.

2. All money received by them in the Mother's name will go to the Mother's service. For themselves they will be allowed to receive shelter and their meals, when necessary, and nothing more.

3. Whatever they may earn for themselves, e.g., by the publication of books, etc., they must give at least half of it to the service of the Mother.

4. They will observe entire obedience to the Head of the Order and his one or two assistants in all things connected with the work or with their religious life.

5. They will observe strictly the discipline and rules of Achar and purity, bodily and mental, prescribed by the Heads of the Order.

6. They will be given periods for rest or for religious improvement during which they will stop at the Math, but the greater part of the year they will spend in work outside. This rule will apply to all except the few necessary for the service of the Temple and those required for the central direction of the work.

7. There will be no gradations of rank among the workers, and none must seek for distinction or mere personal fame but practise strength and self-effacement.

II. Work for the People

8. Their chief work will be that of mass instruction and help to the poor and ignorant.

9. This they will strive to effect in various ways:

1. Lectures and demonstrations suited to an uneducated intelligence.
2. Classes and nightly schools.
3. Religious teachings.
4. Nursing the sick.
5. Conducting works of charity.
6. Whatever other good work their hands may find to do and the Order approves.

III. Works for the Middle Class

10. They will undertake, according as they may be directed, various works of public utility in the big towns and elsewhere connected especially with the education and religious life and instruction of the middle classes, as well as with other public needs.

IV. Work with the Wealthy Classes

11. They will approach the zamindars, landholders and rich men generally, and endeavour—

1. To promote sympathy between the zamindars and the peasants and heal all discords.
2. To create the link of a single and living religious spirit and a common passion for one great ideal between all classes.

3. To turn the minds of rich men to works of public beneficence and charity to those in their neighbourhood independent of the hope of reward and official distinction.

V. General Work for the Country

12. As soon as funds permit, some will be sent to foreign countries to study lucrative arts and manufactures.

13. They will be as Sannyasis during their period of study, never losing hold of their habits of purity and self-abnegation.

14. On their return they will establish with the aid of the Order, factories and workshops, still living the life of Sannyasis and devoting all their profits to the sending of more and more such students to foreign countries.

15. Others will be sent to travel through various countries on foot, inspiring by their lives, behaviour and conversation, sympathy and love for the Indian people in the European nations and preparing the way for their acceptance of Aryan ideals.

After the erection and consecration of the Temple, the development of the work of the Order will be pushed on as rapidly as possible or as the support and sympathy of the public allows. With the blessing of the Mother this will not fail us.

SRI AUROBINDO

1905

April to September; Sri Aurobindo acted for the Principal who was on leave; pay Rs. 550/- + 160/- =Rs. 710/-. He was very much liked by the students.

There was a public meeting at Baroda to protest against the partition of Bengal in the month of September. Sri Aurobindo attended the meeting but did not speak in it because he was in Baroda service.

During this year Sri Aurobindo met Sj. Charu Chandra Dutt, I.C.S. at Thana once in the beginning of the year and another time in September or October.

It was at Thana that he met Raja Subodh Mallick, brother-in-law of Sj. C.C. Dutt, who was a judge at Thana. Sri Aurobindo

stayed five or six days during which time he and Subodh Mallick became great friends and found themselves in complete agreement in political ideology and programme. Subodh Mallick rendered very great services to India and gave unstinted support to Sri Aurobindo in his political work.

Revolutionary—1904 *to* 1910

Along with Tilak, Madhav Rao, Deshmukh and Joshi who became a moderate later, we were planning to work on more extreme lines than the Congress. We brought Jatin Banerji from Bengal and put him into the Baroda Army. Our idea was to drive out the moderates from the Congress and capture it. As soon as I heard that National College had been started in Bengal I found my opportunity, threw off the Baroda job and went to Calcutta as Principal. There I came in contact with B.C. Pal who was editing "Bande Mataram". But its financial condition was precarious. When B.C. Pal was going on tour he asked me to take up the paper. I asked Subodh Mallick and others to finance the paper and went on editing it. Then some people wanted to oust B.C. Pal from the Bande Mataram and they connected my name with it. I called the Sub-editor and gave him a severe thrashing, of course, metaphorically. But the mischief was done. B.C.Pal was a great orator and at that time his speeches were highly inspired, a sort of descent.

Then Shyam Sunder and others came in. It soon drew the attention of large number of people and became an all India paper.

One day I called the Bengal leaders and said : "It is no use simply going on like that. We must capture the Congress, and throw out these moderate leaders from it. Then we decided to follow Tilak as the all-India leader. They at once jumped at the idea. Tilak was not so well-known in Northern parts of India before he was chosen for leadership.

18 December 1938

Chandernagore—Pondicherry

Sri Aurobindo : "While the prosecution was pending I went away to Chandernagore and there some friends were thinking of

sending me to France. I was thinking what to do next. There I heard the Adesh—intuitive Command—to go to Pondicherry."

18 December, 1938

Political Work—Father's Estimate

Sri Aurobindo : There was a sudden transformation during the Swadeshi days. Before that people used to tremble before an Englishman in Bengal. And then the position was reversed. I remember when I wanted to do political work I visited Bengal and toured the districts of Jessore, Khulna, etc. We lfound the people steeped in pessimism, a black weight of darkness weighing over the whole country. It is difficult nowadays to image those days.

I was travelling with Devavrata Bose. He was living on plantains and speaking to the people. He had a very persuasive way of talking. It was at Khulna we had a right royal reception, not so much because I was a politician but because I was son of my father. They served me with seven rows of dishes and I could hardly reach out to them and even from others I could eat very little. My father was very popular at Khulna. Wherever he went he became all-powerfull. When he was at Rangpur he was very friendly with the magistrate. We went to and stayed with his cousin in England afterwards, the Drewetts. It was always "doctor" who got things done at Rangpur.

When the new magistrate came he found that nothing can be done without Dr. K.D. So he asked the Government to remove him and he was transferred to Khulna. It was since that time that he became a politician. That is to say, he did not like English domination. Before that everything western was good. He wanted, for example, all his sons to be great; at that time to join the I.C.S. was to become great.

He was extremely generous. Hardly anybody who went to him for something came back empty-handed."

8 January, 1939

Revolutionary Period—1904 *to* 1910

Sri Aurobindo : Barin does not give the true state of things (in his book.) I was neither the founder nor the leader. It was P.Mitter and Miss Ghosal who started it at the inspiration of Baron Okakura. They had already started and when I visited Bengal I came to know about it. I simply kept myself informed of their work. My idea was an armed revolution in the whole of India. What they did at that time was very childish, killing a Magistrate and so on. Later it turned into terrorism and dacoities which were not at all my idea or intention. Bengal is too emotional, wants quick results and it can't prepare through a long course of years. We wanted to give battle by creating a spirit in the race through guerilla war-fare. But at the present stage of warfare such things are impossible and bound to fail".

December 18, 1938

The government passed the Partition Act on 20th July 1905. This was a signal for a tremendous agitation throughout India and particularly in Bengal.

30th August 1905. A letter to Mrinalini from Sri Aurobindo.

During the second vacation in the college i.e. September, October, November, Sri Aurobindo participated in the Swadeshi and other agitation without openly joining any political party.

21st October 1905. A letter to Mrinalini in which he mentions Barin's illness and completes the letter by stating that "as the time of meditation is nearing" he has to end writing. This means that his yoga sadhana was going on at the time.

Madhavrao, brother of Khashirao, was sent to Europe to get military training, learn preparing bombs, getting arms, etc. He refers to this in one of his letters to Mrinalini : "I have to keep money to send to Madhavrao. He is sent to England on a special mission. I have spent a lot in the Swadeshi movement and I have another work yet to be done which requires enormous wealth". By this "work" was meant the Revolutionary work.

It is clear that since 1902 Sri Aurobindo's interest moved

more and more towards politics and the service at Baroda ceased to interest him.

1906

During this year even though Sri Aurobindo served in the State the greater part of the year was spent in Bengal.

From February 1906 Sri Aurobindo took previlege leave for two months. This made it possible for him to pass the whole of the first term of the college and the Summer vacation in Bengal. Then he presented himself when the second term opened in the month of June and took one year's leave without pay from 12.6.1906 to 12.7.1907. So he passed a week or two at Baroda and again went back to Bengal.

In the month of February there was an agricultural exhibition at Midnapore. Sri Aurobindo was then in Bengal, either at Deoghar or Midnapore.

14th April 1906. The famous Barisal conference was held. Sri Aurobindo was on leave in Bengal. He attended the conference. The conference was declared illegal by the Government and ordered to disperse. Krishna Kumar Mitter, Sri Aurobindo's uncle, refused to leave the pandal. There was a procession to protest against the Government. In the first row were Sri Aurobindo, Bepin Chandra Pal, B. C. Chatterji. Behind them were delegates to the conference in rows of four. The procession was charged by the police in order to disperse it by force. Police allowed the leaders to pass and stopped the delegates from proceeding further. They all stood on the highway and refused to disperse. They were lathi-charged. Many ran away. Chittaranjan, son of Monoranjan Guha was wounded in the head.

It was criminal to shout "Vande Mataram" in the street at that time. So, the young men were instructed to shout in the streets in defiance of the order. If they happened to see a policeman they first went over the varandahs of the houses and shouted from there, —the Varandah is not the road !

After the conference Sri Aurobindo went round the districts of East Bengal in company with Bepin Chandra Pal and a youngman, Sarat. This was for observation and study of these parts and also to bring political awakening by personal contact.

1906 June (first two weeks) Sri Aurobindo came to Baroda. It was at this time that he went to Chandod for the first time. He had been before there twice or thrice during his stay at Baroda with K. D. Deshpande and others. At Karnali near Chandod, he saw Swami Brahmananda. At the time of leaving the Swami each one who was present did the Pranam—bowing. Brahmananda generally kept his eyes closed and those who bowed used to get up and leave. This time when Sri Aurobindo did the Pranam and looked at him, he found Brahmananda with his eyes open looking full at him—as if he saw something extraordinary or as if he recognised somebody. Sri Aurobindo used to say that Brahmananda's eyes were very beautiful.

Once when Sri Aurobindo was on a visit to Chandod he went to one of the temples of Kali on the bank of the Narbada. He went there because of the company. He never had felt attracted to image-worship—if anything, till then he was averse to it. This time when he went to the temple he found a presence in the image. He got a direct proof of the truth that can be behind image worship.

12.3.1906 Declaration of the "Yugantar" was filed.

July 1906 Sri Aurobindo went to Bengal, and in Calcutta stayed with Subodh Mallick at 12, Wellington Street. After some months Abinash was asked to look out for a separate house. There were many reasons for this. One was that Sarojini and Mrinalini wanted to stay with Sri Aurobindo. Another was that there were members of the Mallick family who did not like all kind of persons, especially revolutionary recruits, to come to their house. Sri Aurobindo himself did not like the idea of putting them to any such inconvenience, though his own personal requirements were well looked after there. A house was taken at Chhaku Khansama Lane where Barin, Abinash, Sarojini and Mrinalini stayed with Sri Aurobnndo.

After that they shifted to 23 Scott's Lane—house. Barin went to stay at Murari Pukar Bagan, the rest stayed with Sri Aurobindo.

Houses Sri Aurobindo lived in and the offices with which he was connected :—

1. 12 Wellington Street, Subodh Mallick's house;
2. No. 23 Scott's Lane.
3. Bhupal Chandra Bose's house in Serpentine Lane.

4. Alipore Jail—solitary cell
5. 48 Grey Street (1st floor).
6. Sanjivani Office (after May 1909).
7. No. 8 College Square.
   (Krishna Kumar Mitter's place from 1909 to February 1910).
8. No. 4 Shyam Pukur Lane "Karma Yogin office."

IN INDIAN POLITICS

AUGUST 1906. Establishment of the National College at Calcutta. Sri Aurobindo joined the institution as the Principal.

August 6 1906. Declaration of the "Bande Mataram" filed by Bepin Chandra Pal as the Editor.

September 1906. Sri Aurobindo wrote on the "Anandamath" of Bankim in the "Bande Mataram."

August 22, 1906. The "Bande Mataram" became a joint stock company concern according to Sri Aurobindo's suggestion. A board of directors was appointed. The real editor was Sri Aurobindo, but the responsibility belonged to the board. The Government could not therefore prosecute one single individual. Whenever something was found objectionable by the Government some one came forward to accept the responsibility and go to jail if necessary. The brain of the movement could thus escape imprisonment and continue the work. The articles written were so cleverly written that they violated the law while remaining strictly within its limits.[1]

There are many conjectures about how the "Bande Mataram" was started, what was Sri Aurobindo's connection with it and how it ended. We give here Sri Aurobindo's own explanation, so as to set at rest all doubts :

"Bepin Pal started the "Bande Mataram" with Rs. 500/- in his pocket donated by Haridas Halder. He called in my help as assistant editor and I gave it; I called a private meeting of the young Nationalist leaders in Calcutta and they agreed to take up the "Bande Mataram" as their party paper, with Subodh and Nirod Mullick as the principal financial supporters. A company was projected and formed but the paper was financed and kept up meanwhile by Subodh. Bepin Pal who was strongly supported by C.R.Das and others remained as editor. Hemendra Prasad Ghose and Shyamsunder joined the editorial staff but they could not get on with

[1] Refer to Raticliff's letter later on.

Bepin Babu and were supported by the Mullicks. Finally Bepin Pal had to retire, I don't remember whether in November or December, probably the latter. I was myself very ill almost to death, in my father-in-law's house in Serpentine Lane and I did not know what was going on. They put my name as editor of the paper without my consent, but I spoke to the secretary pretty harshly and had the insertion discontinued. I also wrote a strong letter on the subject to Subodh. From that time Bepin Pal had no connection with the "Bande Mataram". Somebody said that he resumed his editorship after I was arrested in the Alipore Case. I never heard of that. I was told by Bejoy Chatterjee after I came out from jail that he, Shyamsunder and Hemendraprasad had carried on some how with the paper, but the finances became impossible, so he deliberately wrote an article which made the Government come down on paper and stop its publication, so that the 'Bande Mataram' might end with some eclat and in all honour".

Sri Aurobindo

The basic policy of "Bande Mataram" was :

1. To support violence against violence and it was shown that it is indespensable to do so.

2. If injustice is not opposed the enthusiasm, perseverance and unity so necessary to win independence would weaken considerably.

3. To return blow for blow, to stand against attack, awaken manhood in the nation. This is very important for an oppressed nation.

4. Treachery to the nation and perfidy if they are not punished do not stop.

5. A nation that wants to be free must be ready to face tyranny and persecution. Oppression is God's method of preparing a nation. "We are iron on His anvil and the blows are showering upon us, not to destroy but to recreate. Without suffering there can be no growth.

"Bande Mataram" put the programme of Boycott, Swadeshi, National Education, and Passive Resistance with the ideal of forming parallel Government before the nation.

From October 1906 to the beginning of December 1906 Sri Aurobindo had a serious illness. He stayed with Bhupal Chandra

Bose, his father-in-law, at Serpentine Lane, Calcutta. On the 4th November he had very high fever and could not write his editorial for the "Bande Mataram". He recovered partially at the end of November, but got a relapse in December.

From 11. 12. 1906 Sri Aurobindo went to Deoghar for a change but he was back again to Calcutta well before the 26th of December when the Congress Session was to be held.

It was at this Congress held at Calcutta under the presidentship of Dadabhai Naroji that the resolution laying down independence as the goal of the Congress was passed for the first time. Among the Nationalist leaders who attended were Tilak, Lajpatrai, Khaparde, Khare etc. It was mainly due to Sri Aurobindo's efforts in the reception committee and the working committee that the resolution was passed. The resolution accepted by the Reception Committee had to get support from other provinces. Private consultations, and meetings were held at the house of Subodh Mallick under Tilak's leadership where this support was secured. Sri Aurobindo's share in securing this was not insignificant.

To the main resolution demanding swaraj others were added :— e.g., Swadeshi, Boycott and National Education. Sir Phirozshah Mehta, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Surendranath Banerjee—all leaders of the Moderate school of politics, were opposed to the resolution. Dadabhai, the president, was undecided in the beginning. But when he found that there was a strong support to the resolution from Bengal and from other parts of India he accepted it and got it accepted by all. The Congress would have been divided even at Calcutta but for the clever manœvering of the Nationalist party and Dadabhai's support. At last there was a breach at Surat in 1907. It is difficult for the reader to imagine today what a great achievement it was to bring the resolution of Swaraj and get it accepted by the Congress. It is after that that Independence became the accepted goal of the Congress.

During 1906 before the month of December Sri Aurobindo toured Bengal with Devavrata for political activity. When he visited Khulna he had a royal reception as the people considered him their own on account of his father's long stay and service to the town. The dish served to him was so big and the items of food so

numerous that Sri Aurobindo could hardly reach out to all of them.

The practice of Pranayam which he was doing became very irregular due to the pressure of political work and at last came to a stop.

Sri Aurobindo met Tagore during this year once at his Jorasanko Street residence where he went in answer to the latter's invitation for dinner. A Japanese artist, Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose and some other prominent people were present. Tagore visited the "Sanjivani" office now and then where he occasionally met Sri Aurobindo.

Mono Mohan began his service as Professor of English at Patna and then went over to Dacca where he was during 1906. He used to come to Calcutta occasionally, and though he used to keep himself away from politics he was proud of Sri Aurobindo's political work. He used to say: "There are only two and half men in India: one Sri Aurobindo and another Barin, and half is Tilak !!"

1907

From 27-1-1907 to 15-4-1907 Sri Aurobindo was at Deoghar. 17-2-1907 a letter to Mrinalini.

From April 12th to 23rd series on "Passive Resistance" in the "Bande Mataram". One can see there clearly the distinction between non-violence and Passive Resistance. 10th May 1907 search of "Bande Mataram" office. In a letter to Hemendra Prasad Ghose he wrote "It is a great pity that work should be spoiled by friction and misunderstanding."

A reminiscence of the "Bande Mataram" days: Sri Aurobindo is sitting in his house at Scott's Lane. Shyam Sunder Chakravarty comes and asks for the editorial. Sri Aurobindo draws out from the pile of papers on his table some old packing papers and begins writing at one end of it. He finishes the article in fifteen minutes —not a scratch, not a change, not a moment's pause ! Next day that article fans the fire of patriotism in the hearts of nationalists all over India.

15-7-1907 "Sandhya", a revolutionary paper filed its declaration.

24-7-1907 Bhupendranath Dutt, brother of Vivekananda, punished for an article in the "Sandhya". He wanted to offer defence. Sri Aurobindo turned down his proposal as illogical for a revolutionary to recognise foreign court and its jurisdiction.

24-7-1907 Prosecution against the "Bande Mataram". Sri Aurobindo, Bepin Chandra Pal were among the accused.

30-7-1907 Search of the "Bande Mataram" office.

8. 1907 Secnd Prosecution of the "Sandhya"

23-9-1907 Apurva Bose sentenced for three months as the printer of the "Bande Mataram". Sri Aurobindo was acquitted. Tagore (and also many other nationalists) came to see Sri Aurobindo in No. 12 Wellington Street. He had published his "Homage to Sri Aurobindo" when the prosecution was going on in anticipation of the sentence. But as Sri Aurobindo was acquitted he came to congratulate him and when he embraced Sri Aurobindo he said ironically in Bengali "What ! you have deceived us ! (by not going to jail) Sri Aurobindo replied in English : "Not for long you will have to wait, again" implying that he would not be outside the prison for a long time.

5-12-1907 Twelve miles from Kharagpur near Narayangarh an attempt was made on the life of Sir Andrew Frazer, the Governor of Bengal. A bomb was thrown at the train in which he was travelling.

7th, 8th, 9th, November 1907. There was a conference at Midnapore. Mr. K.B. Dutt who was elected president by the 'Moderates' was not allowed to address the conference on the 7th. The nationalists convened a separate meeting on the 8th,—Sri Aurobindo was their leader. He successfully conducted the conference and arranged to pass resolutions supporting the nationalist programme. They were forwarded to the ensuing Congress session at Surat. Sri Aurobindo won over many moderate leaders to the nationalist side. Sri Aurobindo met Satyendra Bose and Khudiram Bose.

3-12-1907. A letter from Mrinalini Devi to Sri Aurobindo in which she said "Abinash will not work for you when he gets married." Abinash was a revolutionary worker who took care of Sri Aurobindo's household.

6-12-1907. Sri Aurobindo sent money to Mrinalini Devi.

20-12-1907. Mrinalini Devi was staying in No. 29/3 Chhaku Khansama Lane, Calcutta and no definite arrangement was made for her expenses upto 20-12-1907.

15-12-1907. A public meeting in Beadon Square. Sri Aurobindo spoke there and a resolution supporting the nationalist programme was passed and was forwarded to the Surat Congress.

22-12-1907. Sri Aurobindo halted at Nagpur for two days on his way to the Surat Congress. Sir Moropant Joshi was present in the meeting addressed by Sri Aurobindo. He was one of those who had taken the oath of revolutionary society "Lotus & Daggers" while in England'. He was now a leader of the Moderates in C.P. India !

"On my way to Surat Congress we had stopped at Nagpur. My lecture was fixed in the theatre. On the front bench was sitting Moropant Joshi. Deshmukh was by his side. Joshi was all along staring (gaping) at me". Sri Aurobindo

26-12-1907. *Surat Congress*

A week before the sessions both parties—the Moderates and the Nationalists—had begun their efforts to secure the majority for their side. The Moderates had chosen Surat as the venue as they thought that it would be easy for them to secure their majority there. Tilak, Khaparde, Khare were already there from the Nationalist side. From among the leaders of Bengal Sri Aurobindo presided over the meetings on Balaji Tekra. In one of the speeches he began "my pen is mightier than my tongue",—a great Sutra that came true in his life ! All the Nationalist leaders used to meet privately every day under the leadership of Tilak to decide controversial questions. There were peace-makers going from one camp to another. The atmosphere was surcharged. Members of the Revolutionary party who had also come in large numbers were arranging their own rendezvous, and discussing their plans. On 27-12-1907 Barin wrote a note to Sri Aurobindo asking to arrange for personal interview with the leaders of the Nationalist party. Tilak, Lajpatrai and others participated in these discussions either personally or through their representatives. They, like Sri

Sri Aurobindo

(as National Leader: presiding over a meeting at Surat, 1907, with Lokmanya Tilak addressing the gathering.)

Sri Aurobindo

(With national leaders, at the 1st conference at Surat (1907) of National Party.
From left — back row: Dr. Munje, Ramaswamy, K. Kuverji Desai.
Second row: Sardar Ajitsing, Sri Aurobindo, Lokmanya Tilak, Saiyad Haider Reza.
Third row: Sri Khaparde, Sri Ashwinikumar Dutta.)

Aurobindo, kept the secret movement separate from the public movement; they considered one complementary to the other.

Before the open session of the Congress Surendranath Banerji, the Moderate leader of Bengal, tried to convene a meeting of all the Bengal delegates to arrive at a unanimous decision. He prepared a draft on behalf of the Moderates of Bengal containing conditions of an agreement with the Nationalists. This was placed before the meeting. Satyen Bose tore off the paper and the meeting dispersed. Sir Phiroszshah Mehta, Gokhale and other Moderate leaders became doubtful about securing majority for their resolution. They depended thereafter on their majority in the Reception Committee. The dispute centered round the resolution passed at Calcutta by the Congress in 1906. The Nationalists wanted to take that as the basis and proceed further in that direction. The Moderates did not want to accept the resolution of 1906 as binding. The Nationalists, when not allowed to move their resolution through the Reception Committee, proposed to bring it before the open session. Both the parties decided to test their strength on the proposal for the Presidentship of the Congress. Surendranath proposed Dr. Rash Behari Ghose and Tilak stood up for Lajpat Rai. There was an effort to prevent Tilak from addressing the house. It was a signal for the pandemonium. Chairs were hurled all round and the police had to be called to restore order.

It was not the time for political wisdom or calm calculation. The impulse for freedom had awakened in the nation like an irresistible flood. It was in 1947—after forty years—that the demand was satisfied in a very large measure.

BEGINNING OF YOGA

WHEN Sri Aurobindo was at Surat he met there Sakhare Baba, a Maharashtriyan yogi, who was intensely interested in the question of Indian independence. Sri Aurobindo found his own sadhana becoming very irregular and disorganised on account of the political work. So he told Barin to arrange his meeting with some one who could help him in his sadhana. One of the disciples of Vishnu Bhasker Lele was there at Baroda. Barin had come to know about him and learnt that Lele was at that time in Gwaliar. A wire was sent to Lele at Gwaliar asking him to come to Baroda. So, when Sri Aurobindo went to Baroda after the break up of the Congress Lele had arrived there.

Thus the political activity on one side and sadhana on the other were both being intensely pursued.

"No, I had no knowledge. I did not know what God was. It was two (or three or four) years before I met Lele that I began Yoga seriously. Deshpande at that time was doing Hatha Yoga, Asanas and such other Kriyas and as he had a great proselytising tendency he wanted to convert me to his view.

But I had thought that a Yoga which requires me to give up the world is not for me. I have to liberate my country. I took to it seriously when I learnt that the same Tapasya which one does to get away from the world can be turned to action. I learnt that Yoga gives power, and I thought why the devil should I not get the power and use it to liberate my country ?

Q: God very cleverly exploited your desire to liberate India ?

A : It was the time of "country first, humanity afterwards and the rest nowhere". It was something from behind which got the idea accepted by the mind ; mine was a side-door entry into Spiritual life.

June 22, 1926

Results of practice of Prāṇāyāma

The results were remarkable. Many visions and sights and figures I used to see. I felt electric power round my head. My powers of writing were nearly dried up; they revived with a great vigour. I could write prose and poetry with a flow. That flow never ceased since then. If I have not written afterwards it is because I had something else to do. But the moment I want to write it is there. Thirdly, great health. I grew stout and strong and the skin became smooth and fair and a flow of sweetness in the saliva. I used to feel a certain aura round the head. There were plenty of mosquitoes there but they did not come to me.

Then there came a Sannyasi—Naga—who gave me the Stotra of Kali. It was very violent Stotra with "Jahi" "Jahi" in it. I used to repeat it, it did not give any results. I visited Ganganath after Brahmanand's death when Keshavananda was there.

It was at this time that I gave up meat diet and found a great feeling of lightness and purification in the system.

With my European mind I had at that time no faith in the Gods. I had gone to Karnali (near Chandod) and there are several temples there. There is one Kali temple and when I looked at the image I saw the living presence there. For the first time I believed in the "presence" of God.

When I went to Bengal and took to political work Pranayam became irregular and I had a great illness which nearly carried me off.

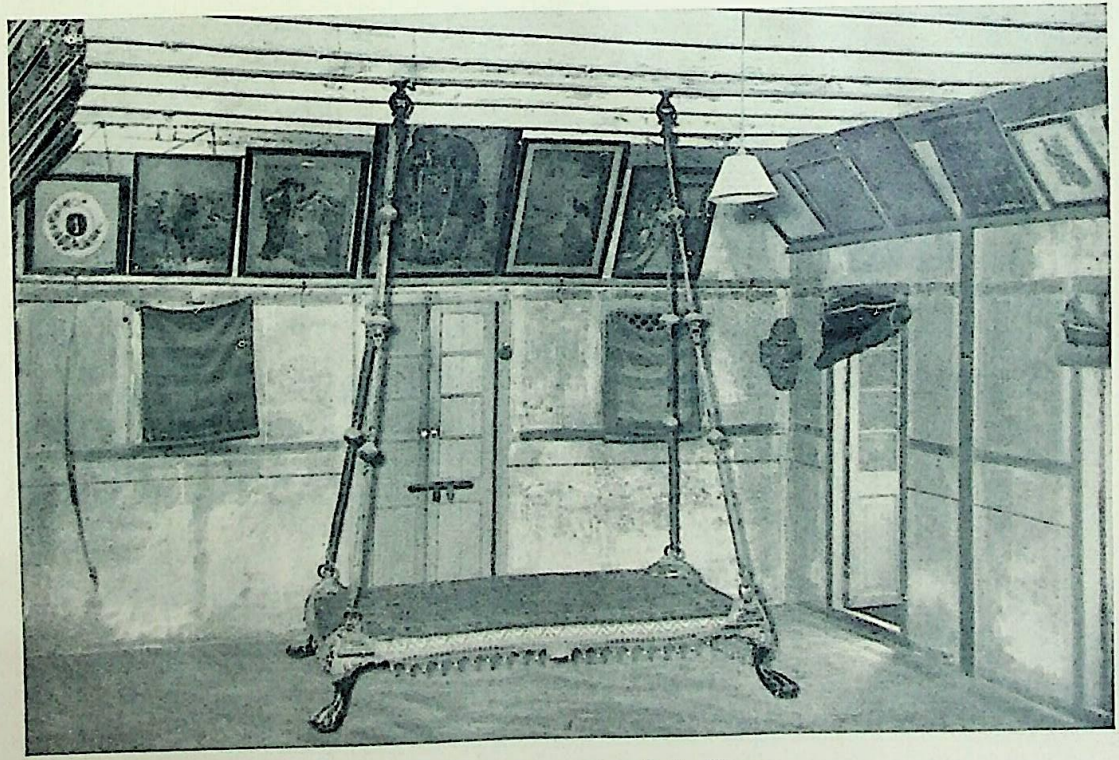
Dec. 5, 1939

Lele met Sri Aurobindo for the first time in Khasirao Jadhav's house at Dandia Bazar for half an hour. This was most probably on any one of the three days 28th, 29th, or 30th December 1907. Sri Aurobindo gave three lectures at Baroda on the Political situation—two at Vankaneer Theatre and one at Manik Rao's gymnasium. Sardar Mazumdar presented Sri Aurobindo with a Pashmina Shawl as it was severe winter then, and Sri Aurobindo was going about only with one shirt on and cheap canvas shoes. He kept no bedding. So while travelling he slept on the board and used his hand for the pillow.

During his stay in Baroda he met Chhotalal Purani in a private interview and explained to him the scheme of the Revolutionary work by drawing a pencil sketch on a paper. He then advised him to meet Barin who met C.B. Purani for three consecutive days explaining the details of the revolutionary organisation. It was thus that seeds were sown of that movement in Gujrat which became so well known afterwards. The inspiration for it came from Sri Aurobindo.

Lele showed his readiness to help Sri Aurobindo in his sadhana and try to give him some concrete results on condition that he should suspend—for, Sri Aurobindo was not ready to give up entirely—his political activity. Lele told me when I met him in 1916 that he had an intuition when he received the telegram telling him to go to Baroda where he would have to give initiation to a very great soul! (Purani). Sri Aurobindo was ready to fulfil the conditions. Lele wanted that he should separate himself from others and stay with him. Sri Aurobindo agreed. He suddenly disappeared from the boiling political atmosphere of which he was an important centre. Friends knew where he was but no one disturbed him. He remained with Lele for three days in the small room on the top floor of Sardar Majumdar's Wada in Baroda. Lele asked him to make his mind blank—which he did. He has himself described this incident later on more than once. Here are his own words :—

"I am glad you are getting converted to silence, and even Nirvan is not without its uses—in my case it was the first positive experience and it made possible all the rest of the sadhana; but as to the positive way to get these things, I don't know if your mind is quite ready to proceed with it. There are in fact several ways. My own way was by rejection of thought. 'Sit down', I was told, 'look and you will see that your thoughts come into you from outside. Before they enter, fling them back'. I sat down and looked and saw to my astonishment that it was so; I saw and felt concretely the thought approaching as if to enter through or above the head and was able to push it back concretely before it came inside. In three days—really in one—my mind became full of an eternal silence—it is still there. But that I don't know how many people



Room in Sardar Majumdar's House
(*Place of first spiritual experience*)

can do. One, not a disciple—I had no disciples in those days—asked me how to do yoga. I said: 'Make your mind quiet first'. He did and his mind became quiet, silent and empty. Then he rushed to me saying, 'My brain is empty of thoughts, I cannot think. I am becoming an idiot.' He did not pause to look and see where these thoughts he uttered were coming from! Nor did he realise that one who is already an idiot cannot become one. Anyhow I was not patient in those days and I dropped him and let him lose his miraculously achieved silence."

"The usual way, the easiest if one can manage it at all, is to *call down* the silence from above you into the brain, and body.

"I think you have made too much play with my phrase 'an accident', ignoring the important qualification, 'it seemed to come by an accident'. After four years of *prāṇāyam* and other practices on my own, with no other result than an increased health and outflow of energy, some psycho-physical phenomena, a great outflow of poetic creation, a limited power of subtle sight (luminous patterns and figures etc.) mostly with the waking eye, I had a complete arrest and was at a loss. At this juncture I was induced to meet a man without fame whom I did not know, a Bhakta with a limited mind but with some experience and evocative power. We sat together and I followed with an absolute fidelity what he instructed me to do, not myself in the least understanding where he was leading me or where I was myself going. The first result was a series of tremendous powerful experiences and radical changes of consciousness which he had never intended—for they were Advaitic and Vedantic and he was against Advaita Vedanta, and which were quite contrary to my own ideas, for they made me see with a stupendous intensity the world as a cinematographic play of vacant forms in the impersonal universality of the Absolute Brahman. The final upshot was that he was made by a voice within him to hand me over to the Divine within me enjoining an absolute surrender to its will—a principle, or rather a seed-force, to which I kept unswervingly and increasingly till it led me through all the mazes of an incalculable Yogic development bound by no single rule or style or dogma or shastra to where and what I am now and towards what shall be hereafter. Yet he understood so little what he was doing that when he met me a month or two later, he was alarmed, tried to undo what

he had done and told me that it was not the Divine but the Devil that had got hold of me."

May, 1932

"As for calm and silence, there is no need of the Supramental to get that. One can get it even on the level of Higher Mind which is the next above the human intelligence. I got these things in 1908, 27 years ago and I can assure you they were solid enough and marvellous enough in all conscience without any need of Supramentality to make it more so. Again, a calm that looks like action and motion is a phenomenon of which I know nothing. A calm and silence that is what I had. The proof is that out of an absolute silence of the mind I edited the "Bande Mataram" for 4 months and wrote 6 volumes of the Arya, not to speak of all the letters and messages etc., etc. I have written since."

About his taste of Marathi food and his memory of it here is what he said in a letter :

"I hope your dinner at Dewas did not turn out like my first taste of Maratha cooking—when for some reason my dinner was *non est* and somebody went to my neighbour a Maratha professor for food. I took one mouthful and only one. O God ! sudden fire in the mouth could not have been more surprising. Enough to bring down the whole of London in one wild agonising swoop of flame !"

1907-1908

It was between these years that Sri Aurobindo met Amarendranath Chatterji afterwards the well-known Revolutionary leader. It was in No. 23 Scott's Lane Calcutta that the interview was arranged for giving him the initiation. Upendranath Banerjee introduced Amar who writes in 1950 about his first meeting in the following terms :

"I was not merely enchanted by my first meeting with him,—I became strong, I became powerful. I got a personal proof of the idea that Diksha—initiation—can be given merely by Darshan (sight) and it does not require either touch or a Mantra."

The two were alone together. Sri Aurobindo began :

"I suppose Upen had talked to you about the work that is to be done for the country. I hope there is no doubt or vacillation or fear in your mind about it".

Amar : "Will you not say something yourself ? Is it the last what Upen said ? I want to hear from you. Have you heard anything about me ?"

Sri Aurobindo said : I have heard about you. You have given lot of money to the Swadeshi movement and that money is used in the service of the country. But is the country going to be freed by the politics of salt and sugar only ? If we want to secure the freedom of the country we have to sacrifice everything for it, and we should be ready to give up even our life for it. If we want to free the country we shall have to conquer the fear of death.

Amar : How many would be able to do it, you think ?

Sri Aurobindo : Is it so difficult to sacrifice oneself for the Motherland ? Men go through so much suffering and trouble to get happiness in life. No sacrifice should be difficult to make for the freedom of the country. If India does not become free man also will not be free. People of other countries think only of their own interest; people of India, even when they think about India, think of the whole world."

Amar : Upen has told me about being ready to sacrifice myself and I have replied to him on the basis of what Bankim has said that as one day death is inevitable, why should one fear it ? My fear comes from another quarter. I feel at present that I am not worthy of such a great mission. Is there any means of attaining that fitness ?"

Sri Aurobindo : "Surrender yourself to God and in the name of the Divine Mother get along with the service of India. That is my Diksha to you".

Amar adds : "That diksha has moulded my life. All fear, all attachment left me". He was given the work of collecting money for the maintenance of young men of the party.

As to what place the "Bande Mataram" occupied in the country and in the estimation of Englishmen a letter written by Mr. Ratcliffe, the then editor of the "Statesman" of Calcutta, to the "Manchester Guardian" will make it clear :—

Manchester Guardian Weekly
26th Dec. 1950
Princes Rishorough.

"We know Aurobindo Ghose only as a revolutionary nationalist and editor of a flaming newspaper which struck a ringing new note in Indian daily journalism.

It was in 1906, shortly after Curzon's retirement, that Sri Aurobindo and his friends started "Bande Mataram" (Hail to the Mother) It had a full-size sheet, was clearly printed on green paper, and was full of leading and special articles written in English with brilliance and pungency not hitherto attained in Indian press. It was the most effective voice of what we then called nationalist extremism".

S. K. Ratcliffe

1908

In the second week of January Sri Aurobindo went to Bombay from Baroda. Sri Aurobindo asked Lele to come to Bombay and Lele granted the request. In Bombay the condition that had already begun at Baroda became more intense. The vacant condition of the mind turned into the experience of the silent Brahman Consciousness. He felt all the multifarious activities of the city of Bombay, the rows of tall houses,—everything became as if things moving on the surface, mere appearances, things unreal against the background of the silent Infinite which alone seemed real.

So, when he got an invitation from the Bombay National Union to address a meeting Sri Aurobindo was in a fix. The mind had become calm, blank,—how was he to deliver a speech ? He could not very well decline the invitation as he was an active political worker and a prominent all-India leader. He asked Lele who said his acceptance was all right and all would be well.

The description of it in his own words will give a clear idea of his experiences and his connection and its duration with Lele :

"Then I took to politics and wanted to resume the yoga. But I did not know what to do because I could not have time for Pranayams. Barin was told that I would like to get further guidance

in the yoga so Barin telegraphed from Surat to Lele who was then perhaps at Gwaliar to come and meet us at Baroda". "He asked me to do nothing but throw away all the thoughts that came. In three days I did that. We used to meditate together. Then I realised the Silent Brahman Consciousness. I began to think from above the brain ever since."

"In that silent condition—without any thought in the mind—I went to Bombay. There I had to lecture at the National Union and so I asked Lele : "What should I do ?" He asked me to pray. But I was so absorbed in the Silent Brahman Consciousness that I could not pray. So I said to him that I was not in a mood to pray. Then he replied that it did not matter. He and some others would pray and I had simply to go to the meeting and make Namaskar to the audience as Narayana and then some voice would speak. I did exactly as he told me. On my way to the meeting somebody gave me a paper to read. When I rose to speak the impression of the head line flashed across my mind and then all of a sudden something spoke out. That was my second experience from Lele."

"When I was in Bombay, from the balcony of the friend's house I saw the whole busy movement of Bombay as the picture in a cinema show, all unreal and shadowy. Ever since I have maintaind that poise of mind—never lost it even in the midst of difficulties. All the speeches I delivered on my way to Calcutta were of the same nature—with some mixture of mental working in some parts."

"Before parting from Lele I asked for his instructions. He was giving me detailed instructions. In the meantime I told him of a Mantra that had arisen in my heart. Suddenly while giving instructions he stopped and asked me if I could rely absolutely on Him who gave me the Mantra. I replied that I could always do that. Then Lele said that there is no need of further instructions."

"Then when Lele came to Calcutta in February 1908 he asked me about my yoga. I had stopped old kind of meditation as it was practically going on all the time. Then he said that the Devil had taken possession of me and wanted to give me instructions. I did not act upon his advice—I did not want to insult him—I then received the command from within that human Guru was no longer necessary for me now.

"All that I wrote in the "Bande Mataram" and the "Karma Yogin" was from this yogic state. It used to run down to my pen while I sat down to write. I have ever since trusted the inner Guide even when it seemed to be leading me astray. I no longer use the method now."

Thus it was that he got the clue not only to the practicality of the yoga but to its dynamism. To the sadhana leading to passivity or inactivity was added the important element of Divine dynamism, Not only did he understand it but put it to test throughout his tour from Bombay to Calcutta. As already mentioned above all activities initiated afterwards were taken up in the same way. The basis of his ideal of divine life as a result of complete transformation of human nature was derived from solid experience gained in the midst of stormy political activity.

In his further development in yoga Sri Aurobindo saw that all the voices heard in sadhana are not from the Divine. Not only so, but there are voices coming from ignorance and even Asuric voices, and the sadhak has to be on guard against them. In the light of his later development he declared that a direct Divine Guidance was possible after the attainment of the Divine and one can dispense with the need of guidance (or working) of the voice.

Thus, Sri Aurobindo's yoga does not rest upon the basis of a miracle, or a blind faith in something occult or some intellectual abstract principle of philosophy. It is based on concrete experience and tested in the struggle of life.

When he spoke about the nine deportations at the Jhalakati Conference he said :

"What is this storm that is so mighty and sweeps with such a fury upon us ? And I said in my heart, 'It is God who rides abroad on the wings of the hurricane—it is the might and

force of the Lord that manifested itself and almighty hands that seized and shook the roof so violently over our heads to-day....We were building an edifice to be the temple of our Mother's worship, were rearing her a new and a fair mansion, a place fit for her dwelling. It was then that he came down upon us. He flung himself upon the building we had raised. He shook the roof with his mighty hands and part of the building was displaced and ruined. Why has he done this ? Repression is the hammer of God that is beating us into shape so that we may be moulded into a mighty nation and an instrument for his work in the world. We are iron upon his anvil and the blows are showering upon us not to destroy but to recreate. Without suffering there can be no growth."

In the same address he said : "The rulers of the country in their scanty wisdom have thought that by lopping off the heads the movement will cease. They do not know that great as he is, Ashwini Kumar Dutt is not the leader of this movement, that Tilak is not the leader,—God is the leader. They do not know the storm that has been sweeping over the country was not sent by them, but by him for his own great purpose !"

"We are the descendants of those who performed Tapasya and underwent unheard of austerities for the sake of spiritual gain and of their own will submitted to all the sufferings of which humanity is capable. We are the children of those mothers who ascended with a smile the funeral pyre that they might follow their husbands to another world".

"It is because God has chosen to manifest himself and has entered into the hearts of his people that we are rising again as a nation".

"Swaraj means fulfilment of our national life".

He refused to bow down to repression and said : "It is by looking the storm in the face and meeting it with a high courage, fortitude, and endurance that the nation can be saved. It is that which the Mother demands from us, which God demands from us".

"The storm may come down on us again and in greater violence. Then remember this, brave its fury, feel your strength, train your strength in the struggle with the violence of the wind, and by that strength hold down the roof over the temple of the Mother".

July 3rd, 1909

We see already how much of spirituality is breathed into this address. To him life was already a field of the Divine, God was the leader of the political awakening, and it was He who was working through all contrary external appearances for the fulfilment of His purpose. Man is only an instrument of the Divine.

The Uttarpara speech is openly a description of his spiritual experience while in jail. When he wanted to give written instructions to C. R. Das for the defence in the court he heard the inner voice.

"I still thought it necessary to write instructions. Then all that was put from me and I had the message from within. "This is the man who will save you from the snares put round your feet. Put aside these papers. It is not you who will instruct him. I will instruct him."

Then further he referred to the same voice saying "I am in the nation and its uprising and I am Vasudeva, I am Narayana, and what I will, shall be, not what others will. What I choose to bring about, no human power can stay".

"You have spoken much to-day of my self-sacrifice and devotion to my country. I have heard that kind of speech ever since I came out of jail, but I hear it with embarrassment, with something of pain. For I know my weakness, I am a prey to my own faults and backslidings. I was not blind to them before and when they all rose up against me in seclusion, I felt them utterly. I knew then that I the man was a mass of weakness, a faulty and imperfect instrument, strong only when a higher strength entered into me..."You have got only some strength from me to speak a word to this nation which will help to raise it."

"I had many doubts before. I was brought up in England amongst foreign ideas and an atmosphere entirely foreign. About many things in Hinduism I had once been inclined to believe that they were imaginations, that there was much of dream in it, much that was delusion and Maya. But now, day after day, I realised in the mind, I realised in the heart, I realised in body the truth of Hindu religion. They became living experiences to me, and things were opened to me which no material science could explain....When I approached God at that time, (in Baroda) I hardly had living faith in Him. The agnostic was in me, the atheist was in me, the sceptic was in me and I was not absolutely sure that there was a God at all.... So when I turned to yoga and resolved to practise it and find out if my idea was right, I did it in this spirit and with this prayer to Him, "If Thou art, then Thou knowest my heart. Thou knowest that I do not ask for Mukti, I do not ask for anything which others ask for. I ask only for strength to uplift this nation, I ask only to be allowed to live and work for this people whom I love and to whom I pray that I may devote my life."

"This is the Sanatan Dharma, this is the eternal religion which you did not really know before, but which I have now revealed to you. The agnostic and the sceptic in you have been answered :... "I am giving them (Indians) freedom for the service of the world ....It is the Shakti that has gone forth and entered into the people. Since long ago I have been preparing this uprising and now the time has come and it is I who will lead it to its fulfilment."

"This is the word that has been put into my mouth to speak to you to-day. What I intended to speak has been put away from me, and beyond what is given to me, I have nothing to say. It is the ord that is put into me that I can speak to you. That word is now nished".

May 30th, 1909

The Uttarpara speech is a public document of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual life and contains in seed form some of the basic principles of the yoga he evolved. The human in him yet spoke of the Divine and then the human was completely transformed into the Divine. The Light that he shed was the Light Divine and it is for humanity to follow it and profit by it.

He spoke with that inspired voice at its height at Bombay, before the National Union, at the Jhalakati Conference and at Uttarapara.

1908

During his stay at Baroda in the first two weeks he met the Maharaja on the latter's request. Second time when the Maharaja wanted to meet Sri Aurobindo, Lele asked him not to meet him and so he did not meet him.

1908 January 19th. Lecture before the National Union, Mahajan Wadi, Bombay. Another lecture at Girgaum.

1908 January. Lecture at Gaekad Wada, Poona.

1908 January 24th. Lecture at Nasik.

1908 January 26th. Lecture at Dhulia.

1908 January 28th. Lecture at Umaraoti.

1908 January 30th & 31st. Lecture at Nagpur.

1908 February 1st. Lecture at Nagpur. Shyam Sunder Chakravarty was also present.

1908 February. Barin wrote a letter to Lele inviting him to Calcutta. It was considered necessary for revolutionary youths to have training in spiritual life. It was when Lele visited Calcutta that he came to know about the secret political movement of Barin and others. He became very serious and drew their attention to the grave dangers; but nobody listened to his warning. All were

full of enthusiasm and unmindful of consequences. Prafulla Chaki was then in Calcutta and Lele wanted to take him to Bombay with him for sadhana. The proposal was referred to Sri Aurobindo who left it to Prafulla's own choice. Prafulla refused to separate from Sri Aurobindo.

During his stay at Calcutta Lele was living at Seal's lodge. He wrote a letter to Sri Aurobindo on 10th February. When they met—Lele and Sri Aurobindo—Lele asked him not to follow the path he was pursuing. He warned him that the voice that was guiding him was Asuric. He also said he would not be responsible for the consequences if he continued the same practice. Sri Aurobindo freed him from the responsibility of his sadhana. He thence forward relied entirely on the inner guidance. Here in fact ended his relation with Sj. Lele as Guru. Sri Aurobindo ever afterwards felt greatly indebted to Lele and acknowledged his debt with deep gratitude. 1908. In March (most probably) Lele returned to Bombay after giving grave warning to Barin and others.

1908 February 17. Letter from Sri Aurobindo to Mrinalini Devi.

1908 April 4. A meeting of the Nationalists in Chandernagore banned by Tardevell.

1908 April 8. At Chitala (near Chandernagore) a meeting addressed by Sri Aurobindo.

1908 April 11. A bomb which did not explode thrown in the house of Tardevell.

1908 April. On Good Friday Sri Aurobindo left Calcutta to go to Kishoregunj. He reached Kishoreganj on Saturday: a meeting and an address.

1908 April 30. Bomb thrown at Mrs. and Miss Kennedy by mistake. It was intended for Mr. Kingsford, the District Magistrate. Both the ladies died.

1908 May 1. Arrest of many revolutionaries.

AFTER THE ALIPORE JAIL

1908 May 4. Sri Aurobindo's residence searched by the police and himself arrested at 48, Grey Street, Calcutta. Many members of the secret society were simultaneously arrested : Barin, Ullaskar Dutt, Indra Bhushan, Upendra Nath Banerjee, were all arrested at Murari Pukur Bagan.

Murari Pukur Bagan was Sri Aurobindo's property. It is a plot of seven Bighas having in its centre three rooms (only ground floor), an outside verandah. All round were coconut trees, mangoes and betelnut trees.

1908 May 5. Prafulla Chaki arrested, he committed suicide by shooting himself so that the secret of the party may not leak out, through him.

1908 May 8. House of Subodh Mallick at Benares searched.

1908 May 10 Sudhir Sarkar arrested at Khulna.

1908 May 11. Sudhir's statement recorded.

1908 May 17. The case was brought up before Mr. Birley.

1908 May 18. The case begun.

Sarojini issued an appeal for funds for the defence of Sri Aurobindo.

An appeal of defence of Arabinda Ghose

We hope the readers will respond readily to the following appeal:

My countrymen are aware that my brother Aravinda Ghose stands accused of a grave offence. But I believe, and I have reason to think that the vast majority of my countrymen believe, that he is quite innocent. I think if he is defended by an able counsel he is sure to be acquitted. But as he has taken a vow of poverty in the service of the Mother land, he has no means to engage the services of an eminent Barrister-at-law. I am, therefore under the painful necessity of appealing to the public spirit and generosity of my countrymen on his behalf. I know all my countrymen do

not hold the same political opinions as he. But I feel some delicacy in saying that probably there are few Indians who do not appreciate his great attainments, his self-sacrifice, his single-minded devotion to the country's cause and the high spirituality of his character. These embolden me, a woman, to stand before every son and daughter of India for help to defend a brother,—my brother and theirs too.

Contribution should be sent either to me at 6, College Square, Calcutta or to my Solicitors Messrs. Mamal and Agarwala, No. 3, Hastings Street, Calcutta.

SAROJINI GHOSE

"Ferrar who was class-mate could not come to see me in Court when the trial (Alipur) was going on and we were put in a cage lest we should jump out and murder the judge. He was a barrister practising at Sumatra or Singapore. He saw me in the cage and was much concerned and could not know (understand) how to get me out. It was he who gave me the clue to Hexameter verse in English. He read out a line from Homer which he thought was the best line and that gave me the swing of the meter."

Dec. 3, 1939

1908 August 31. Narendranath Goswamy's murder in the hospital by Kanailal Dutt. After this incident the prisoners were all separated and kept in cells.

1908 September 14. Kanailal Dutt hanged in jail.

1908 October 19. Alipore case committed to sessions. In this case there are two groups of the accused: in one there were 33 and in the other 9. Exhibits produced were 4000, and other material evidence 300 to 400. Altogether 222 witnesses were examined: in the sessions 208 witnesses were called. The case lasted upto 1909 April 13.

Jury summed up its opinion on 1909 April 13th and 14th.

1909 May 5. Judgement was delivered.

During the period of trial Sri Aurobindo had resigned his Principalship of the National College in order to save embarrassment to the Council and to enable them to run the institution.

"In the meeting you had yesterday I see that you expressed sympathy with me in what you call my present troubles. I don't know whether I should call them troubles at all, for the experience that I am going to undergo was long foreseen as inevitable in the discharge of the mission that I have taken up from my childhood, and I am approaching it without regret."

To the students and teachers of the Bengal National College. 22 August, 1907

1908-1909 (1908 May 4th to 1909 May 5th). During this period Sri Aurobindo was an undertrial prisoner. When the case was committed to sessions all the undertrial accused were kept in one hall. Sri Aurobindo passed most of his time in meditation. When they were brought to the court for hearing, he hardly attended to the evidence or the conduct of the case. C.R. Das was at last engaged to defend Sri Aurobindo and as we already said Sri Aurobindo was guided by an inner voice to leave the defence completely in his charge. His view of life was thus undergoing a radical change in jail. In the beginning of the sadhana the idea was to take the Divine's help in the mission that he had undertaken. But the nature of the experiences during the jail life completely changed his outlook. He decided to dedicate himself entirely to spiritual life and his outer life thenceforward became a part of his sadhana and its result. The field of action also enlarged enormously afterwards,—from the service of the country and its freedom it became a world wide work touching intimately the future of humanity.

There were very few among the accused whom Sri Aurobindo knew personally. All around talking, singing etc. was going on in the jail; in the midst of it Sri Aurobindo pursued his sadhana unconcerned. Some among the people around him knew that Sri Aurobindo was doing some yoga but they had no idea of the kind of sadhana. He speaks about this himself as follows:

"I spent the first part of my imprisonment in Alipore jail in a solitary cell and again after the assassination of Noren Gossain to the last days of the trial when all the Alipore-case prisoners were similarly lodged each in his own cell. In between for a short time we were all put together. There is no truth behind the state-

ment that while I was meditating they gathered around me, that I recited the Gita to them and they sang verses, or that they put questions to me on spiritual matter and received instructions from me".

13 September, 1946

Also regarding the same period he wrote:

"I was carrying on my yoga during these days learning to do so in the midst of much noise and clamour but apart and in silence and without any participation of others in it. My yoga begun in 1904 had always been personal and apart, those around me knew I was a sadhak but they knew little more as I kept all that went on in me to myself. It was only after my release that for the first time I spoke at Uttarpara publicly about my spiritual experience.

13 Sep. 1946

"In my own case I saw anger coming up and possessing me. I was very much surprised as to my own nature. Anger has always been foreign to me.

1908. At another time while an undertrial prisoner in Alipore a terrible catastrophe was averted. Prisoners there had to wait outside for sometime before entering the cells. As we were doing so the Scotch Warder came and gave me a push. The young men around me became very excited and I did nothing but gave him such a look that he immediately fled and called the Jailor. It was a communicative anger and all the young men rallied round to attack him. When the Jailor who was rather a religious man arrived the Warder said I had given him a "subordinate look". The Jailor asked me and I told him I had never been used to such treatment. The Jailor pacified the whole group and said while going: "we have to bear our cross". But by anger I do not mean the Rudra-Bhava which I had a few times."

1 January, 1939

"This reminds me of a compliment given to my eyes by Sir Edward Baker, Governor of Bengal. He visited us in Alipur Jail and told Charu Dutt, "Have you seen Aurobindo Ghose's eyes? He has the eyes of a mad man!"

Charu Dutt took great pains to convince him that I was not at all mad but a Karma-Yogi."

3rd January, 1939

"I met him (Navin Sen) twice: Once in Bengal at Subodh Mallick's house. I was serious at that time. Another time I met him when I was president of the National Conference at Surat. Then also I could not laugh being the president! So he said about me: "The man who never laughs".

3rd January, 1939

Some people have said that Sri Aurobindo received spiritual help from some other persons and from religious books. This is not quite true, for he says in a letter:

"I began my yoga in 1904 without Guru, in 1908 I received help from a Maratha yogi and discovered the foundations of my sadhana but from that time till the Mother came to India, I received spiritual help from no one else. My sadhana before and afterwards was not founded upon books but upon personal experiences that crowded upon me from within. But in the jail I had the Gita and Upanishads with me, practised the yoga of the Gita and meditated with the help of the Upanishads; these were the only books from which I found guidance; the Vedas which I first began to read long afterwards in Pondicherry rather confirmed what experiences I already had than was any guide to my sadhana. I sometimes turned to the Gita for light when there was a question or a difficulty and usually received help or an answer from it."

13 September 1946

There were experiences during this period in jail that may be called extraordinary and miraculous. About how the faculty to appreciate painting came to him he says:

"I know something about sculpture, but I was blind to painting. Suddenly one day in the Alipore jail while meditating (I) saw some pictures on the walls of the cell and lo and behold! The artistic in me opened and I knew all about painting except of course the more

material side of the technique. I don't always know how to express though, because I lack the knowledge of the proper experience, but that does not stand in the way of a keen and understanding appreciation. So, there you are : all things are possible in yoga."

Another experience was that of levitation. (It is strange that all over India the commonest people knew that Sri Aurobindo remains above the ground !) When once this question was asked he said : "That was once in jail. I was then having a very intense sadhana on the vital plane and I was concentrated. And I had a questioning mind : "Whether such Siddhis as Utthapana (levitation) are possible ?" I then suddenly found myself raised up in such a way that I could not have done it myself with muscular exertion. Only one part of the body was slightly in contact with the ground and the rest was raised up against the wall. I cannot have held my body like that normally even if I wanted to and I found that the body remained suspended like that without any exertion on my part. That is the only thing that happened. In the jail there were many such extraordinary, and one may say, abnormal experiences. As I was doing sadhana intensely on the vital plane I think these might have come from there. All these experiences passed away and did not repeat themselves."

It was during his jail life that he resorted to fasting to see how far spiritual results could be attained by it. In the Alipore jail he fasted for eleven days and lost ten pounds in weight during that period, though he felt no worse for it.

He used to hear the voice of Vivekananda during meditation. This is what he wrote about it : "It is a fact that I was hearing constantly the voice of Vivekananda speaking to me for a fortnight in the jail in my solitary meditation and felt his presence, but this had nothing to do with alleged circumstances....The voice spoke only on a special and limited but very important field of spiritual experience and it ceased as soon as it finished saying all that it had to say of the subject."

13 September, 1946

"Now what you call pity is something quite different from compassion and both are different from Samata. Pity and

human sentimentalism are a result of nervous repulsion—some movement in the vital being. I myself, when I was young could not read anything relating to cruelty without feeling that repulsion and a feeling of hatred for those who did it. I could not kill an insect say a bug or a mosquito. This was not because I staunchly believed in Ahimsa, but because I had that pity and nervous repulsion. Later on, even when I had no mental objection, I could not harm anything because the body rejected the act. When I was in jail, I was mentally subjected to all sorts of torture for the first 15 days. I had to look upon pictures of all sorts of suffering before me and then the thing passed away."

26th July, 1923

Panchanan Tarkachudamani, a great sanskrit scholar, was also in jail with some of his disciples. One day Abinash Bhattacharjee requested Sri Aurobindo to explain certain passages from the Upanishad which he did. Abinash recounted the explanation to Panchanan Babu. After hearing it Panchanan said: "Well, Abinash, I would not have been able to explain this portion as simply as Sri Aurobindo has done."

Hem Sen was a co-accused. He used to get biscuits and other eatables from outside. He used to keep these things under his pillow at night. There were thefts of them by the other accused. Those who would be waking at the time of the theft would get a share! Hem Sen generally used to quarrel during day for these little thefts at night. One day the theft was being committed and the thief saw that Sri Aurobindo was awake. Abinash took a few biscuits and put them in his hand. He smiled and began to eat them lying down.

Upen Banerjee was very much struck by the brilliance of Sri Aurobindo's hair and he thought that it was due to oil. On inquiry he found that there was no oil with Sri Aurobindo. So, he asked Sri Aurobindo who replied that it was due to sadhana.

1908 May. (That the earth from Ramkrishna's hut was brought by Sri Aurobindo has been said by some magazines.)

Here is what Sri Aurobindo says about it:

"The earth was brought to me by a young man connected

with the Ramkrishna Mission and I kept it; it was there in my room when police came to arrest me."

1909 February 10. Ashutosh Biswas, the public prosecutor was killed.

1909 May 6. Sri Aurobindo was acquitted.

After his acquittal Sri Aurobindo remained with Krishna Kumar Mitter's family. He was in jail in Agra. His aunt became very weak. So the doctor advised her to take bath in the Ganges. Generally somebody accompanied her to the Ganges. The aunt would come up to Sri Aurobindo when he would be writing an article for the "Dharma" or the "Karmayogin" and tell him, "Auro, please just come along with me, I am going for my bath in the Ganges". And Sri Aurobindo would leave the writing and accompany her.

Basanti (Chakravarty, his cousin, daughter of Krishna Kumar Mitter) writes : "I never saw Sri Aurobindo getting angry. He is sitting in the hall and writing. His sandals are lying at a little distance. Mother (her) comes, puts on his sandals and goes up to the terrace to take her constitutional walk. After some time people come to see Sri Aurobindo. He gets up, searches for his sandals all around. In the meantime sees the aunt and smiles and asks her: "Little aunti ! have you put on my sandals ? There are visitors who have come to see me". The aunt gives him his sandals. That she took them away—that he had to wait—nothing of it made him angry".

1909 May 30th. The historical Uttarpara speech. It was Amarendranath Chatterji who went to Calcutta from Uttarpara to fetch Sri Aurobindo to speak to the Sanatan Dharma Association. He already knew Sri Aurobindo through secret society organisation and because of his initiation by him. Amar writes : "I went to the "Sanjivani" office to fetch Sri Aurobindo. I saw him there absolutely quiet, as if he was in meditation. So, I also did not talk long with him. We went by train to Uttarpara. Many who were the audience also came there by the same train. The train reached at 3 o'clock. The time for the meeting was 5.30 P.M. The jamindar of Uttarpara, Raja Piyari Mohan and his son Michhari Babu had come to the station to receive Sri Aurobindo. After taking a little

rest and tea at the house of Surendranath Chattopadhyaya a regular procession was organised. The meeting was fixed at the open courtyeard of the Library on the eastern side, on the west coast of the Ganges. Sri Aurobindo was the only speaker. There were about ten thousand men in the audience. His voice was not voluminous and so the audience established pin-drop silence in order to be able to hear him. (There were no loudspeakers in those days).

He was heard in the pin-drop silence. The reception he got here was extraordinary. A heap of garlands was on the table. Most of them of Jasmine flowers. One of them was specially prepared by Michhari Babu and went down to the feet below the knees. When the lecture was over then as usual with him Sri Aurobindo left the heap of garlands on the table and went away. The long garland prepared by Michhari Babu was taken away by somebody—of course not stolen but taken as a token of the occasion. (Amar writes) Who would not have a desire to have a garland offered to Sri Aurobindo ? Michhari Babu was very angry. (Amar says) I explained to him that such a greed was natural for everybody, so you should not get angry."

Next morning he got the garland back but Michhari Babu was quiet. He only told the man who had taken it, "Go and beg pardon from God, I have pardoned you already."

"Yesterday if he was caught he would have got such a thrashing! —But to-day the iron hand turned into gold!"

Even Michhari Babu agreed with Amar and said—"Yes, you are right. Sri Aurobindo's speech has produced immediate result."

Amar Chatterji very often described his spiritual experience when he had Sri Aurobindo's Darshan (meeting). He was pulled by Panch Kodi Banerji, editor of the "Hitavadi"—who used to quote Shashtra and tell him that one should always keep spiritual experiences a closely guarded secret.

Amar replied : "My Guru creates Shashtra, he does not follow it."

After his release from the Alipore Bomb case Sri Aurobindo stayed at the Sanjivani office. At that time some youngmen of the "Yugantar" party used to come to him to read the Gita. Sri Aurobindo used to sit with hands crossed, in the freezing cold of the

winter, with only a shirt on, in western varandah. He used to forget himself while expounding the Gita. One day it became one o'clock Sarojini came out with the food. Then they knew that it was lunch time for him and they left him, and then he ate.

When Sri Aurobindo came out of jail the whole political atmosphere had completely changed. Almost all the leaders of the nationalist party were either in jail or in self-imposed deportation. All around was depression and hopelessness—though the feeling against the foreign rule had not abated. It had, on the contrary, increased by repression. Sri Aurobindo had decided to continue the fight single-handed. Every week there used to be a meeting in Calcutta where in place of thousands that thronged before, there were hardly a few hundred. And even these had no enthusiasm, no spirit, no life. Once while describing his experience of the ebb of political enthusiasm he said humorously: "The experience I had in Bengal gave me a good insight into our people's psychology. Even when all the leaders were jailed and some deported we continued to hold our political meetings in College Square. In all there used to be about a hundred persons, that too, mostly, passers-by. And I had the honour to preside over several such meetings"!

It was after his release that he started "Dharma" and "Karmayogin". One in Bengali, the other in English. These had very wide circulation and had no financial difficulties like the "Bande Mataram".

1909 Sep.(?) Sri Aurobindo's address to the Jhalakati Conference.

1909 Sep. Sri Aurobindo piloted the Hugli District Political Conference. This district contains the city of Calcutta. The political situation was similar to that at the Surat Congress in 1907. The reception Committee was formed of the Moderates and they had framed draft-resolutions welcoming the reforms granted by the British Government. Sri Aurobindo took up the Nationalist party's cause single-handed and established the Bengal Nationalist association. He removed the age-limit clause from the admission rules and completely changed the form of the certificates given to the delegates. He also changed the draft resolutions and brought in new ones and got a majority to accept them. The Moderates were defeated and thought of leaving the Congress. Sri Aurobindo again used

his statesmanship and softened the resolutions a little and ordered his party which was the majority not to oppose those resolutions which the Moderates were persuaded to propose. He took this move to preserve the political unity of Bengal. His own partisans were not quite happy. So he asked them to absent themselves from the session. In fact, the moderate leaders when they rose to speak were not heard, the audience became unruly and shouted all along. It was when Sri Aurobindo came and asked them to keep silent or go out that peace was restored and the party that was in majority left the meeting in obedience to their leader.

The bitter complaint of the moderates was that people were listening to young and inexperienced leaders—like Sri Aurobindo—and turning a deaf ear to old and tried ones.

It is not known for certain, but is most probable, that Sri Aurobindo took part in the Bengal Provincial political Conference, held at Barisal and he addressed the gathering also. The old constitution of the Congress was such that only Moderates could become members of the central working body,—the nationalists could not come in it. Surendranath Banerji called a private meeting on behalf of the moderates of Bengal, to which he invited Sri Aurobindo and other prominent nationalists of Bengal in order to present a united front to the All India Congress, to be held at Benares. Thus the moderates wanted to remain with the nationalists in Bengal. This was due to the fact that Surendranath Banerji was very anxious to be the leader of the united Bengal in Indian politics. This can happen if the moderates vote for nationalists and send them as delegates! Besides, the nationalists would be obliged to accept the constitution passed at Surat. Sri Aurobindo refused to accept those terms as it would amount to compromise on essentials. He did not want to maintain unity that way. He proposed a change in the constitution of the Congress and pleaded for freedom of the new political bodies that might have been formed, to send in their representative so that the nationalists can have their own men in the Congress. The negotiation broke down on these issues.

Sri Aurobindo thought of continuing his own work independently. He saw that a movement like the Home Rule was a possibility. Mrs. Besant, in fact, later carried that idea into effect. But Sri Aurobindo felt in it the abandonment of the ideal of total inde-

pendence—free India within the British Empire would be the goal of the Home Rule movement—and therefore did not begin it. Passive Resistance also he thought about. But he knew that he could not be the leader of such a movement.

In the meantime British Government declared some Reforms in which he saw some signs of its yielding. So, he declared his opinion by inaugurating the principle "No cooperation without control". This, he thought, would enable the nationalists to take hold of those departments wherein the nation was given the control and to introduce its own programme through them.

But in the meantime repression was in full swing and Sri Aurobindo saw no scope for carrying out his own ideas. So, he conducted the two papers—"Dharma" and "Karmayogin"—and published an article entitled "Open letter to my countrymen" in which he enunciated the main lines along which the nationalists must continue the work in case he was imprisoned. There were many rumours about his arrest at that time.

December 25, 1909. "Open letter to my countrymen" in the "Karmayogin".

There is a small history behind this "letter". Sri Aurobindo's contact with Sister Nivedita has been already described in his own words—"I had no occasion to meet Nivedita after that until I settled in Bengal as Principal of the National College and the editorial writer of the "Bande Mataram". By that time I had become one of the leaders of the public movement known first as extremism, then as nationalism, but this gave me no occasion to meet her except once or twice at the Congress, as my collaboration with her was solely in the secret revolutionary field. I was busy with my work and she with hers and no occasion arose for consultations or decisions about the conduct of the revolutionary movement. Later on, I began to make time to go and see her occasionally at Bagbazar. In one of these visits she informed me to go into secrecy or to leave British India and act from outside so as to avoid interruption of my work. There was no question at that time of danger to her, inspite of her political views, she had friendly relations with high Government officials and there was no question of her arrest. I told her that I did not think it necessary to accept her suggestion; I would write an open letter to the Karmayogin which I thought would prevent this action by

the Government. This was done and on my next visit to her, she told me that my move had been entirely successful and that the idea of deportation had been dropped. The departure to Chandernagar happened later and there was no connection between the two incidents".

13 September, 1946

CHANDERNAGORE

"All the energy that I have I owe to Yoga. I was very incapable before. Even the energy that I put forth in politics came from the Yoga."

6 September, 1926

February, 1910. Chandernagore

From 1909 November to February 1910 Sri Aurobindo stayed at the house of his Uncle Krishna Kumar Mitter at No. 8 College Square. He used to go to the office of the " Karmayogin " and " Dharma " at No. 4 Shyama Pukur Lane everyday four o'clock in the afternoon....There was not much work to do in the office. Usually four or five of the people would sit together and try automatic writing. It was winter and Sri Aurobindo came there wrapped in his shawl.

He used to talk to the members and try automatic writing. One has, in that experiment, to sit with a blank mind pen in hand, and allow a free action to some force that may intend to write through the medium of that passivity. Sometimes he was so late in these sittings that trams used to stop plying and a horse carriage had to be hired for him to take him to his uncle's house in the College Square. When he went to Pondicherry he spent sometime in automatic writing. It is not that what one receives in this way is, or must be, always correct and true; but the experience is useful for a contact with occult levels and for the knowledge of the working of subtle forces.

This is how he describes the circumstance of his going to Chandernagore :

"I was at the "Karmayogin" office and we knew about the search that was going to be made with the object of arresting me. There were some people there; Ramchandra (Majumdar) was there

preparing to give a fight to the police and many other ideas were flying about when suddenly I heard a voice from above saying—"No, go to Chandernagore". After leaving jail I used to hear voices. In those days I used to obey them without questioning. About coming to Pondicherry also I had heard a voice".

The people who were present were : 1. Ramchandra Majumdar, 2. Suresh Chakravarty—Moni, 3. Biren Ghose, 4. Bijoy Nag. After hearing the voice Sri Aurobindo decided to act immediately and in about ten minutes he was on the bank of the Ganges. They started from the "Karmayogin" office about 8, o'clock at night, Sri Aurobindo and Ramchandra Majumdar leading. About fifty paces behind them Biren, and about the same distance behind Biren, Suresh followed. They went a little zig-zag and reached the Ganges. This was done to evade the surveillance of the C.I.D. men who were posted at the "Karmayogin" office. That day he seemed to have been conspicuous by his absence. They called out a boat and engaged it for Chandernagore. Sri Aurobindo boarded the boat with Biren and Suresh who accompanied him.

There are many stories current about Sri Aurobindo's departure for Chandernagore. Some have been published in magazines by persons who have acted on wrong information or accepted a rumour as fact and created confusion. In order to set at rest once and for all such unauthorised versions we give here his own description of it even at the risk of repetition :—

"It was not Gonen Maharaj who informed me of the impending search and arrest, but a young man on the staff of the "Karmayogin, Ram Chandra Majumdar, whose father had been warned that in a day or two the "Karmayogin" Office would be searched and myself arrested. There have been many legends spread about this matter and it was even said that I was to be prosecuted for participation in the murder in the High Court of Shamsul Alam, a prominent member of C.I.D., and that Sister Nivedita sent for me and informed me and we discussed what was to be done and my disappearance was the result. I never heard of any such proposed prosecution and there was no discussion of the kind; the prosecution intended and afterwards started was for sedition only. Sister Nive-

dita knew nothing of this new happenings till after I reached Chandernagore. I did not go to her house or see her; it is wholly untrue that she and Gonen Maharaj came to see me off at the Ghat. There was no time to inform her; for almost immediately I received a command from above to go to Chandernagore and within ten minutes I was at the Ghat, a boat was hailed and I was on my way with two young men to Chandernagore. It was a common Ganges boat rowed by two boatmen, and all the picturesque detail about the French boat and the disappearing lights are pure romance. I sent someone from the office to Nivedita to inform her and ask her to take up the editing of the "Karmayogin" in my absence. She consented and in fact from this time onward until the suspension of the paper, she had the whole conduct of it: I was absorbed in my sadhana and sent no contribution nor were there any articles over my signature. There was never my signature to any of the articles in the "Karmayogin" except twice only. The last being the occasion for the prosecution which failed. There was no arrangement for my staying in Chandernagore at a place selected by Nivedita. I went without previous notice to anybody and was received by Motilal Roy who made secret arrangements for my stay; nobody except myself and a few friends knew where I was."

September 13, 1946

There was no mishap on the way except that the boatmen had to drag the boat in shallow waters once or twice during the night.

1910 February, Chandernagore

The boat anchored at the Strand at Chandernagore. Suresh and Biren got down and informed Charu Chandra Roy of Sri Aurobindo's arrival and asked him if he can make arrangements for his stay. Charu Chandra was afraid and did not know what to do. In the meantime, when Biren and Suresh were thinking of going back to the boat with disappointing reply, one Sishir Ghose took them to Motilal Roy. Motilal on coming to know about it readily accepted to accommodate Sri Aurobindo. He went to the boat and brought it near to the place where he stayed. Sri Aurobindo disembarked and was taken to his house. His request to keep his arrival secret was complied with and Motilal Roy made arrangements to keep him underground.

The two, Suresh and Biren, returned to Calcutta the next day in order not to arouse any suspicion. Thus nobody, not even his closest co-workers knew where Sri Aurobindo had gone. He wrote a chit to Nivedita requesting her to take charge of the "Karmayogin" and telling her that he was going underground. She accepted the task and conducted the paper. He sent no articles after that to the "Karmayogin".

On the first day Motilal Roy made an arrangement in his Baithak khana—the reception room; from there he took him to a godown where he used to keep chairs (from the furniture workshop). It was on the first floor of the house. He went to bring some tiffin for him to eat. When he came he saw that Sri Aurobindo was in meditation ! He gave him the tiffin. Sri Aurobindo took it mechanically. In the afternoon he took him to his parlour and gave him bath. It was winter and the bath with cold water gave him a little shiver. Motilal Roy had to buy the food from the shop to avoid suspicion.

He talked to Motilal Roy and told him to surrender everything to God. At night Sri Aurobindo was taken to a friend's house to sleep for the sake of safety. Second day also passed. In the evening when Motilal met him Sri Aurobindo asked him to make arrangement somewhere else. So, Motilal brought him to his own house at night. Third day also he remained with Motilal. Everyday afternoon Motilal used to talk with him on the subject of yoga. Many things Sri Aurobindo explained to Motilal. On the third day at night Motilal took him to the northern part of Chandernagore (Gondalpara) called "Coolilines" for safety.

Altogether Sri Aurobindo remained in Chandernagore for one month and ten or fifteen days. He gave sadhana to Motilal and thus were sown the seeds of what afterwards became the Pravartak Sangha. It separated from Sri Aurobindo after 1920 August.

1910, Feb.-March : Residence at Chandernagore.

Motilal Roy of Chandernagore describes the impression Sri Aurobindo made on him : "a completely surrendered individual, —one felt when he spoke as if somebody else was speaking through him. I placed the plate of food before him,—he simply gazed at it. Then ate a litttle, just mechanically ! He appeared to be

absorbed even when he was eating; he used to meditate with open eyes, and see subtle forms and spiritual visions".

"While the prosecution was pending I went away secretly to Chandernagore and there some friends were thinking of sending me to France. I was thinking what to do next. Then I got the Adesh—command—to go to Pondicherry." Sri Aurobindo

18-12-1932

Sri Aurobindo's sadhana at Chandernagore went on very intensely; especially, he saw many visions on the subtle planes. He used to see three or four figures of Goddesses at the time of meditation and they were seen going away at the end of it. It was later when he went to Pondicherry that he knew them as Ila, Bharati, Mahi and Saraswati.

Sri Aurobindo did not meet anyone at Chandernagore except Motilal and one or two persons who attended on him for his needs.

After Sri Aurobindo went to Chandernagore he received many anonymous letters at his Calcutta address in one of which he was asked to come out. These letters were sent to Sri Aurobindo. In this challenging note he said that he had not gone away out of fear and that there was no warrant against him. If there is one he would come out. Then it was heard that the Government had issued a warrant, which only confirmed Sri Aurobindo's suspicion that it was written by an agent of the British Government. But in reality there was no ground for any warrant.

Some people then thought—and even now there may be some who might so think—that Sri Aurobindo left politics because he felt that he could do nothing or that he was afraid.

Here is his own explanation :

"I may also say that I did not leave politics because I felt I could do nothing more there; such an idea was very far from me. I came away because I did not want anything to interfere with my Yoga and because I got a very distinct ADESH in the matter. I have cut connection entirely with politics, but before I did so I knew from within that the work I had begun there was destined to be carried forward, on lines I had foreseen, by others, and that the ultimate triumph of the movement I had initiated was sure

without my personal action or presence. There was not the least motive of despair or sense of futility behind my withdrawal."

(This letter is repeated in quotations from "Sri Aurobindo on Himself".)

Some people believed that there was a ban imposed on Sri Aurobindo's entry into British India. That this is not correct is clear from his letter to Baptista in April 1920. In an evening talk he said : "There never was any ban on my entering British India. On the contrary Lord Carmaechal sent me an invitation to return to India and settle down at some place like Darjeeling and discuss philosophy with him. I rejected the offer".

At the end of March (1910) Motilal Roy sent word to Sukumar Mitter at Calcutta about Sri Aurobindo's intended departure for Pondicherry.

1910, March

Towards the end of March Moni,—Suresh Chakravarty,—received a note from Chandernagore telling him to go to Pondicherry and arrange for a house. Moni had to start on 28th. A Tamil weekly called "India" used to be published from Pondicherry. It was published by some nationalists and one Srinivasachari who was known to the revolutionary group was connected with it. Subramanya Bharati was working with him and Krishnamachari was his partner. The paper supported the nationalist and revolutionary outlook. A letter of introduction addressed to Srinivasachari was given to Moni. Moni walked to the Howrah station and then took his seat in the second class. Saurin Bose, Mrinalini Devi's cousin and Sukumar Mitra, Krishna Kumar's son, were on the platform, to see him off. They gave him the second class ticket and Rs. 30/- in cash. He was dressed as an Anglo-Indian. Moni reached Pondicherry on the 31st.

1910 March; *Departure of Sri Aurobindo to Pondicherry*

At the end of March (most probably third week) Sri Aurobindo got an inner indication to go to Pondicherry which he says in his letter to Baptista in 1920, is "my place of retreat, my cave of Tapasya, not of the ascetic kind, but of a brand of my own invention".

DEPARTURE FOR PONDICHERRY

Q : Why did you choose Pondicherry as the place for your sadhana ?

A : Because it was by an Adesh—higher command—I was asked to come here.

Out of those who took part in arranging the journey of Sri Aurobindo from Chandenagore to Pondicherry three persons are still alive. They have published an agreed account of the incident under the signature of Nagendra Kumar Guha Roy. It has been approved of by Sj. Sukumar Mitter. The facts are as follows :—

He asked Motilal to make arrangements for his departure, Motilal wrote a letter to Amar Chatterji at Uttarapara in which he informed him about Sri Aurobindo's departure from Chandernagore in a boat on the 31st March and asked him to make an arrangement to change the boat at Dumur Tala Ghat and to ferry him from there to the steamer "Dupleix". Other arrangements would be made, said Motilal, by Sukumar Mitter. He also said that Sukumar would be present at the Calcutta Ghat.

Motilal wrote another letter to Sukumar at Calcutta informing him about Sri Aurobindo's intention of going to Pondicherry and also telling him that Sri Aurobindo wants him to make the necessary arrangements privately so as to keep his departure secret. He was asked to meet them at the Calcutta ghat with the ticket for Pondicherry by the steamer "Dupleix" and the youngman who was to accompany him.

It was necessary to take great precautions so that the information about Sri Aurobindo's departure should not leak out. It is difficult for the present generation to form an idea of the tense atmosphere of those days. For example, the house of Sukumar Mitter was under surveillance, especially after Sri Aurobindo's stay there. The work which Sukumar had to do was a difficult one.

As soon as he got Motilal's letter Sukumar called Nagendra Kumar Guha Roy a nationalist worker of Noakhali, to the "Sanjivani"

office and gave him two trunks and asked him to take them to his Mess where he was living. Nagendra jocularly asked whether they contained bombs. Sukumar asked him not to bother about the contents but keep the trunks with him. He took them to No. 44/1 College Square.

On the next day Sukumar gave two names to Nagen and asked him to buy two second class tickets for Colombo for these persons. This was done to put the police off the scent. He had taken the two names from the list of subscribers to the "Sanjivani", so that even if the names are inquired into they would be found to correspond to real persons, not false and imaginative. The ticket for Colombo was taken so that all Inquiries would be directed, if at all, to Colombo instead of Pondicherry. Sukumar also instructed Nagen to reserve a double cabin so that the two can travel together. Nagen bought the tickets and gave them to Sukumar. Sukumar asked Nagen to keep the tickets with him.

Then on the 31st of March 1910, Sukumar called Nagen Guha and asked him and Surendra Kumar Chakravarty to hire a boat at the Bagbazar ghat and go to Chand Pal Ghat with the trunks and put them in a cabin in the steamer "Dupleix" that afternoon. He also told them two passengers would come in a boat and it was they who were travelling by the steamer. They will get into the boat which you will hire and reach the steamer.

Nagen was a little puzzled and so he asked Sukumar as to how they would recognise those two men. Sukumar replied that he had given all information to Suren. Sudddenly Nagen got some light into his mind and he felt that it was Sri Aurobindo who was the passenger. So, he asked Sukumar "Is it not Sri Aurobindo—your Auroda—who is going ?"

Sukumar was surprised and smiled and told him, "You have correctly hit the mark. But how did you come to know ?"

Nagen said :—"Somehow I felt like that".

Sukumar :—"It is true; but take care, none else should know it."

As previously arranged Amar Chatterji and Manmatha Biswas hired a boat at Uttarpara on the thirty-first of March and met Sri Aurobindo at the Dumur Tala Ghat and took him into their boat and ferried him to the Calcutta side of the river. But to their disappointment they found that neither Sukumar nor Bijoy Nag had

come to meet them as arranged. So, Amar hired a coach and took Sri Aurobindo in it and drove to Sukumar's house in the College Square. He stopped the carriage at a distance and sent Manmatha Biswas to inquire if Sukumar was in the house. There was no one there. So they concluded that Sukumar must have gone to meet them at river ghat and turned back.

The fact was that Nagen Guha Roy and Surendra who were sent by Sukumar to meet Sri Aurobindo and conduct him to the "Dupleix" were delayed in crossing the river and missed the boat carrying Sri Aurobindo, Amar and Manmatha. Failing to meet Sri Aurobindo, Nagen and Surendra returned to Sukumar and told him about the mishap. Sukumar then told them to go immediately to Chandpal ghat and take back the trunks from the cabin. Surendra left the work at this stage. It was six o'clock in the evening already. Nagen found that the doctor who issued the health-certificate had already examined every passenger and left for his home. He met the Captain, took the address of the Doctor and took back the trunks. He hired a carriage and the coolie who brought back the trunks, told Nagen that he knew the Doctor's place and also his servant and would arrange everything for him. He asked the coolie to wait there at the ghat and drove to Sukumar's place. He found Sukumar waiting for him. Nagen informed him about the trunks having been brought back. Sukumar asked him to hurry up to the ghat and meet Sri Aurobindo and Amar who were waiting there in a carriage, to give them the tickets and arrange to get the Doctor's certificate. He paid the Doctor's fees to Nagen.

Nagen took back the trunks and drove to Chandpal ghat and found the carriage of Sri Aurobindo waiting on the wayside. The coolie already known to Nagen came to his carriage and informed him that the passengers for whom he was waiting had already arrived. He had already informed the waiting Babus about Nagen's having the trunks.

Nagen then put the trunks in the waiting carriage (outside) got into the carriage and sat by the side of Amar and Sri Aurobindo and Bijoy Nag were on the opposite seat. The coolie sat with the coachman.

The Doctor stayed in Chowranghee. The Doctor was called by the coolie. In the meantime Nagen gave the tickets and names

and their address to Sri Aurobindo. He gave the money to Sri Aurobindo to pay the Doctor his charges. His charge was Rs. 32/-

They had to wait for half an hour before the Doctor called them for examination. They were all talking among themselves in low tone. Sri Aurobindo was silent. The porter got the impression that Sri Aurobindo was having some misgivings told his impression to Nagen Guha Roy :

Nagen Guha Roy told the porter : "No, the Babu has no such fear; only he had malarial fever and his body is weak. So you think he is afraid." But the porter did not seem to be convinced by Guha Roy's explanation. He ran to Sri Aurobindo, stood in front, and said : "Babuji, why are you afraid ? the Doctor is a very good man; there is no reason for fear". He shook Sri Aurobindo's arms. We three looked at each other at his strange behaviour and smiled. Sri Aurobindo also smiled.

In a short time the servant of the Doctor came and took the two people inside. After about fifteen minutes they came out with their medical certificates. In that short interval the European Doctor remarked that Sri Aurobindo spoke chaste English and on inquiry was told that he had received his education in England.

Then they all went back in the same carriage to Chandpal ghat. There was no trace of anxiety and restlessness on Sri Aurobindo's face. The other people—Amar, Nagen etc.—were a little upset and anxious as the arrangement did not go off as expected. But Sri Aurobindo for whom they were all so anxious was unmoved, quiet, without the least anxiety like a statue—as if in meditation. It was here that Nagen Guha Roy saw Sri Aurobindo in that fearless state for the first time—he had not met him before.

When they reached Chandpal ghat it was nearly 11 o' clock of the night. They all went up to the reserved cabin with the trunks. Bijoy began to prepare bedding for Sri Aurobindo. Amar and Nagen stood before Sri Aurobindo with joined hands; Amar gave money given by Zamindar Rajendra Mukherji of Uttarpara to Sri Aurobindo. Then they took leave. Nagen bowed to him and both went down, the gangway. The assumed names of Sri Aurobindo and Bijoy were—Jyotindranath Mitter and Bankimchandra Basak respectively. The only persons who knew about this were: 1. Motilal Roy, 2. Suresh Chakravarty or Moni who was already at Pondicherry,

3. Amar Chatterji, 4. Manmathanath Biswas, 5. Surendra Kumar Chakravarty, 6. Sukumar Mitter, 7. Nagendra Kumar Guha Roy, 8. Bijoy Kumar Nag who accompanied Sri Aurobindo, 9. Rajendranath Mukherji, Zamindar of Uttarpara. The steamer left Calcutta in the early hours of the morning, April 1. 1910.

Part Two

PONDICHERRY

Pondicherry, 1910

MONI had already reached Pondicherry on the 31st March. He met Srinivasachari and informed him about Sri Aurobindo's arrival on the 4th of April. But he and others did not trust his word. They thought it most improbable that Sri Aurobindo should seek to come to Poncicherry, so far in the South instead of other places nearer to Bengal. Moni pressed upon them the need of having a house. But they were not keen on it. At last on the day of arrival Moni asked them to arrange for a house in advance, they said they should manage to put him up, when he came. They all along suspected Moni to be a spy. But in case Sri Aurobindo actually came they said they would give him a public reception. Moni argued with them and prevailed upon them to drop the idea as Sri Aurobindo was coming secretly and wanted to remain in seclusion. Moni, Srinivasachari, Bharati went to the port to receive Sri Aurobindo; they found Sri Aurobindo and Bijoy Nag with the two trunks. The steamer reached Pondicherry at 4 o'clock on the 4th of April 1910. After tea Sri Aurobindo was taken to the house of Shanker Chetty in Comty Chetty Street. Sri Aurobindo remained there till October as the guest of Shanker Chetty.

Sri Aurobindo's aunt and uncle—Mr. and Mrs. Krishna Kumar Mitter and particularly his grand mother, Mrs. Rajnarayan Bose, were very anxious about Sri Aurobindo and they wanted to have authentic news about his safe arrival at Pondicherry. One week after Sri Aurobindo left Calcutta, a man came to see Sj. Krishna Kumar Mitter and informed him that Sir Charles Cleaveland, Director General of Criminal Investigation, who was putting up in the

Great Eastern Hotel, had received the news in code that Sri Aurobindo is in Pondicherry. The gentlemen had come to give this information assuming that Sj Mitter must be very anxious about his safety. This shows how well the secret was kept, for, Sj. Sukumar Mitter who took a leading part in arranging Sri Aurobindo's departure for Pondicherry, had evidently not informed his own father about it.

May 1910

Motilal Roy sent a man, Sudarshan, to inquire about Sri Aurobindo's safe arrival at Pondicherry and to inform him.

Paul Richard came to Pondicherry this year on behalf of M. Paul Bluson for election to the French Chamber. He did not get elected.

Richard came to know that Sri Aurobindo who had come to Pondicherry was doing yoga. Most probably it was Sir Naidu, who knew Richard, arranged an interview between Sri Aurobindo and Richard. It was in Shanker Chetty's house that they met. They met for two days for two to three hours a day. Some years later (1918 probably) he wrote a book, 'The Dawn over Asia' in which he mentioned Sri Aurobindo as the future leader of Asia.

One of the questions related to the symbolic character of the "Lotus". Sri Aurobindo explained that the lotus stands for the opening of the consciousness to the Divine. It can be seen on any of the subtle planes of consciousness.

At Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo did not want to meet any one without special purpose. He gave instructions to Moni and Bijoy to discourage casual visitors. He was thus living in practical solitude though in the midst of a town. He stayed in a room on the top floor of Shankar Chetty's house and used to come down for bath only.

It was here that Sri Aurobindo fasted for twenty three days. Moni and Bijoy were the two persons who knew about it. During the fast Sri Aurobindo did all his usual work regularly— i.e. walking and meditation and writing etc. And when he broke the fast he took the same quantity of food that he used to take before,— i.e. he did not begin to take it gradually as people generally do.

He suffered no diminution of mental or vital energy. What he found was that in the present stage of man's development a certain diminution of material substance was taking place. He concluded that physical life would be impossible without food.

Fast 1910-1911

Q : Is it possible to do without food ?

Sri A : Yes, it is. When I did my fast of about 23 days or more when I was living in Chetty's house, I very nearly solved the problem. I could walk eight hours a day as usual. I continued my mental work and Sadhana as usual and I found that I was not in the least weak at the end of 23 days. But the flesh began to grow less and I did not find a clue to replacing the very material reduced in the body.

When I broke the fast, then also I did not observe the usual rule of people who observe long fasts,—by beginning with little food and so on. I began with the same quantity as I used to take before.

....I tried fasting once in jail but that was for ten days when I used to sleep also once in three nights. I lost ten pounds in weight but I felt stronger at the end of ten days than I was before I began the fast. I could lift up the weight after the fast which I could not before.

June 15, 1926

Effect of Fasting 1908-1910

I fasted twice : once in Alipore for ten days and another time in Pondicherry for 23 days. At Alipore I was full of Yogic activities, I was not taking my food and was throwing it away in the bucket, of course, the Superintendent did not know it, only two warders knew about it and they informed others saying : The gentleman must be ill ; he will not live long ! Though my physical strength was diminishing I was able to raise a pail of water above my head which I could not do ordinarily.

At Pondicherry while fasting I was in full mental and vital vigour. I was even walking eight hours a day and not feeling tired

at all. And when I broke the fast I did not begin slowly but with the usual normal food.

Q : How is it possible ?

Sri A : One draws the energy from the vital plane instead of depending upon physical substance. Once in Calcutta I lived for a long time on rice and banana. It is a very good food.

January 1, 1939

K.V. Rangaswamy Iyengar, the zamindar of Kodairam met Sri Aurobindo for the first time in Shankar Chetty's house. He represented the landlords in the Legislative Assembly of Delhi during the British regime (upto 1926).

He came seeking Sri Aurobindo. The reason was as follows : He knew a yogi, Nagai Japata who was the Guru of his family. He had called his disciples and devotees to meet him knowing that the time of his death was near. K.V.R. Iyengar asked him about the spiritual guide he must take for his future progress. Then the Yogi remained quiet for a time and then said that a great Yogi will come from the North whose help he could take. The question then was asked as to how to recognise that particular great Yogi as so many yogis come to the South from the North. Then he replied the great Yogi will come seeking a refuge in the South, and he will make a declaration of three things before he will arrive.

So, when K.V.R. Iyengar came to know that Sri Aurobindo had come to Pondicherry and had retired from politics, he found one clue to identify him. As the "Yogi from the North"—Uttar Yogi—, about whom Nagai Japata had spoken. Besides, the letters of Sri Aurobindo to Mrinalini Devi that were produced in the court, contained, in one of them, a statement of the "three madnesses" that were a part of himself. This was understood to be the declaration of "three things" predicted by the yogi.

"There was a famous Yogi in the South who while dying said to his disciple that a Purna Yogi from the North would come down to the South and he will be known by three sayings. Those three sayings were the three things I wrote in a letter to my wife. The zamindar disciple of that Yogi found me out and bore the cost of the book '*Yogic Sadhan*'."

What transpired between the two at the interview is not known. But it is known that K.V.R. Ayengar gave promise of economic help to Sri Aurobindo and actually gave some money. These were days of great danger to anyone who dared to render any kind of help to a revolutionary political leader. That is why nothing was spoken about the details of the interview or about the exact extent of the help rendered. K.V.R. Ayengar came twice again to Pondicherry to see Sri Aurobindo. It was he who got the small book "Yogic Sadhan" printed at the Vani Vilas Press and gave the copies to Sri Aurobindo.

With K.V.R. Ayengar had come V. Ramaswamy Ayengar, later known as "Va-Ra" in tamil literary world. He later on came and stayed with Sri Aurobindo at Pondicherry for sometime. The remarkable thing about V. Ramaswamy is that Sri Aurobindo had seen him in the subtle before he actually met him. This is how he mentioned it in a letter.

"I myself have had these visions, only I don't usually try to remember or verify them. But there were two curious instances which were among the first of this kind and which therefore I remember.... The other was a certain V. Ramaswamy whom I had to meet, but I saw him not as he was when he actually came, but as he became after a year's residence in my house. He became the very image of the vision, a face close cropped, rough, rude, energetic, the very opposite of the smooth faced Vaishnava who came. So that was the vision of a man I had never seen, but as he was to be in the future—a prophetic vision".

24-10-1934

1910 October. Change of house from Shanker Chetty's house.

Sri Aurobindo shifted to Rue Suffrin—in the South of the town—in a house belonging to one Sunder Chetty. He remained there till April 1911.

1910 October. Saurin Bose, cousin of Mrinalini Devi, came to Pondicherry.

1910. November. Nolini Kanta Gupta came to Pondicherry. In all there were : Moni, Bijoy, Saurin and Nolini.

1910-1912. Life at Pondicherry was hard when they were in Comty Street. Moni and Bijoy or both, used to prepare a cup

of tea for Sri Aurobindo in the morning. In the afternoon the food consisted of what was cooked in Shankar Chetty's house. Usually there was: rice, vegetables, rasam and sambar. In the nights Sri Aurobindo used to take a cup of payas (a kind of milk-soup). They all used to sleep on the ground. For Sri Aurobindo there was a thin bedding. Moni and Bijoy used to lie on grass mattresses. In the later days at Comty Street, Moni and Bijoy bought eggs and prepared something for Sri Aurobindo.

When they removed to the hired house in Rue Suffrin, then one of the four members of the household had to cook by turns. The daily routine was changed here: in the morning tea, milk, sugar and bread (loaf) were given to all, (each separately). The time for lunch was between 11.30 and 12.30. The food given was 3 lbs. of meat between five members, or a curry used to be prepared, along with other food.

Between three and four o'clock in the afternoon, a cup of tea was given to Sri Aurobindo alone. At night fish, rice and one vegetable or curry used to be prepared.

There was only one camp cot for Sri Aurobindo, one table and two chairs. There was no servant. After 1914, a regular servant was engaged.

During the first three months of the stay at Pondicherry (1910) there used to be seances in the evening in which automatic writing was done. The book "Yogic Sadhan" was written in that way, one chapter everyday, the book being finished in a week or eight days. On the last day a figure that looked like Rammohan Ray seemed to be disappearing in the subtle by the side of the corner of the ceilings. It was inferred that Rammohan Ray had dictated these chapters. The Editor's Epilogue added at the end was written by Sri Aurobindo—he has called himsef there "Uttar Yogi".

"After 1927 Sri Aurobindo withdrew "Yogic Sadhan" from circulation because it was received by him (but not written by him.) After knowing that Sri Aurobindo had gone to Pondicherry Sj. Mono Ranjan Guhathakurta and Sj. Shyam Sundar Chakravarty wrote a letter requesting him to guide them (and the party) in politics. The letter was answered: its purport was that Sri Krishna has taken the responsibility of freeing India. And so all of us must

act from a firm status in yoga. This letter was read at the house of Shyam Sundar Babu, in Vidyasagar Street, Calcutta."

BALAI DEVSHARMA

1911 :—Up to April 1911 Sri Aurobindo remained in Sunder Chetty's rented house.

From April 1911 to April 1913 he remained in Rue St. Louis in the house of Raghav Chetty.

During the year Motilal Roy came to Pondicherry and stayed for a month and a half. He stayed in the city and it was arranged that he should meet Sri Aurobindo twice a week. He asked about his sadhana : Sri Aurobindo had given him a Mantra at Chandernagore which Motilal was repeating. He asked Sri Aurobindo whether he should continue the Japa. Sri Aurobindo asked him to stop it. In order to maintain secrecy Motilal used to come by the back door of the house.

Motilal has mentioned about his visit to Pondicherry in 1911 in one of his books. The description and the details given there are highly coloured by imagination. One thing he mentions is true, that there was great economic hardship during this period.

In this year also cooking was done by turns. All other members used to finish their bath and wait for lunch in the kitchen which was also the dining room. Sri Aurobindo used to take his bath last and come directly to the dining room. There were only two lamps in the house—one candle light in Sri Aurobindo's room and another small kerosine lamp in the kitchen. When dinner was ready at night the candle lamp was taken to the kitchen.

Motilal Roy quotes a letter of Sri Aurobindo : "The present position is that we have four annas cash with us."

1911 : During this year Sri Aurobindo gave Latin, Greek and French lessons to Moni and Nolini.

It was Sri Aurobindo's intention to return to the field of work after a certain poise of sadhana was established. In a diary dated 30-3-1924, it is noted "when Sri Aurobindo came to Pondicherry the idea was that the sadhana might take about six months after which time all those who were here would go back and restart the work. Then one year passed and yet Sri Aurobindo did not

go back. Then a period of four years was put down as the limit. In the meantime, the first world war interevened".

1912.

During this year books worth ten rupees were ordered every month.

Sri Aurobindo went to Srinivasachari's house on the occasion of his daughter's marriage.

K. V. R. Ayengar met Sri Aurobindo in the St. Louis House. He seems to have promised financial help but evidently it was irregular and perhaps inadequate. V. Ramaswamy (Va. Ra) came from Tanjore to stay with Sri Aurobindo. He used to meet Sri Aurobindo daily in the evening. K. Amrita used to visit V. Ramaswamy.

An incident which was likely to happen but which did not come about deserves to be mentioned in order to give an idea of the atmosphere and the difficulties of those days. There was in those days one Nand Gopal Chetty, a fisherman, whose family have been stevedores to the steamers touching not only Pondicherry but Madras, Nagapattam, etc. The family is rich and influential and Nand Gopal was taking a prominent part in the politics of French India. He seemed to have agreed to participate and help in a plan of the British Government agents to carry Sri Aurobindo out of the limits of French India with the help of goondas so that he may be arrested by the British authorities and held up to some fabricated charge. The information of this intended plan reached Sri Aurobindo through Moni, Bijoy and others. And so to foil the plan they armed themselves with acid bottles to prevent any forcible entry into the house. But fortunately no one turned up. It was known afterwards that a warrant of arrest was issued on the same day against Nand Gopal by the leaders of the opposite party in connection with local elections and he had to flee from Pondicherry to Madras to evade arrest. The plan was thus completely miscarried.

1912 *August* 15

Sri Aurobindo's birthday was celebrated. Some local people, Sada, Pitrus, David and four others besides the members of the

house took part in the celebration. Sri Aurobindo sat on a chair in the outer verandah (in the house in Rue de Mission Etranger) and all those who had come passed one by one in front of him. Some sweets were distributed.

Nagendra Kumar Nag, a relation of Bijoy Kumar Nag from Khulna was suffering from T.B. He came to Pondicherry to try a change of climate near the sea and to see if he could be cured by the spiritual help of Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo had left the St. Louis house due to financial stringency and had shifted to Mission Street in a small house.

V. V. S. Aiyar being implicated in revolutionary activity came to Pondicherry this year (1912).

When Sri Aurobindo was in St. Louis house the French Police came and searched the house. The circumstances were as under :

Many political refugees and revolutionaries from India had gone over as refugees to Pondicherry because it was French territory and the right of political asylum is included in the agreement between the two governments. Before the first world war, the French generally looked upon the English as undesirable rivals and they jealously asserted the right of giving asylum to political workers who were against the British rule in India. The British Government, in consequence, increased the number of its secret agents,—C.I.D. men in Pondicherry. V. V. S. Aiyar, the revolutionary, Subramanya Bharati, the patriot poet, and Srinivasachari were there already (in 1912). Then Nagaswamy Aiyar came and from Bengal Sri Aurobindo and four other persons with him also came to Pondicherry.

Some secret service man of the British Government threw a tin containing some seditious literature into the well in the house of V. V. S. Aiyar. As the British agents could act in French territory, they employed Mayuresan, a French Indian, to complain against S. Bharati and other patriots alleging that they were engaged in dangerous activities and that if a search of their house was made, proof of the complaint would be found. He had not mentioned Sri Aurobindo by name but as Bharati, V. V. S. Aiyar and Srinivasachari were friends to Sri Aurobindo, the French Government had included his name in the search.

But the whole scheme of the secret agents fell through, because the tin came out from the well when V. V. S. Aiyar's maid servant drew water. Bharati came to Sri Aurobindo immediately and asked his advice. Sri Aurobindo told him to inform the French Police and ask them to come and see the tin to find what it contained. Thus French Government took charge of the tin and found some seditious pamphlets and journals. On some there was the image of Kali and some writing in Bengali. The suspicion was that all these refugees were carrying correspondence with and trying to hatch conspiracy with the help of Shyamji Krishna Varma, Madame Cama and other leaders of the revolutionary movement in Europe.

The investigating Magistrate was one M. Nandot who came to search Sri Aurobindo's house with the chief of police and public prosecutor. They found no furniture in the house, only a few trunks and a table and a chair. On opening the drawers of the table they found only books and blank and written papers. On some of the papers he saw Greek written. He was very much surprised and asked if Sri Aurobindo knew Greek. When he came to know that he knew Latin, Greek and other European languages, his suspicion waned yielding place to a great respect for Sri Aurobindo. Mayuresan was then threatened with charge of making a false complaint and so he disappeared from Pondicherry and went away to British India.

M. Nandot invited Sri Aurobindo to meet him in his chambers and Sri Aurobindo complied with his request.

Financial condition was very hard during this year—sometimes for three or four days in the week all the members had to go without fish and meat.

A letter written to Motilal Roy on the 3rd July 1912 gives an idea of the stringent economic situation.

Letter to Motilal of "Pravartak" dated July 3, 1912

3rd July, 1912

Dear M.

Your money (by wire and letter) and clothes reached safely. The post office here has got into the habit (not yet explained) of

not delivering your letters till midday. That was the reason why we wired to you thinking you had not sent the money that week. I do not know whether this means anything — formerly we used to get your letters on Tuesday, after it comes to Wednesday, then Thursday and finally Sunday. It may be natural revolution of French republicanism. Or, it may be something else. I see no signs of the seals having been tampered with, but that is not an absolutely sure indication of security. The postman may be paid by the police. Personally however I am inclined to believe in the Republican administration theory. The Republic always likes to have time on its hands. Still, if you like, you can send important communication to any other address here you may know of for the present (of course by French post and a Madrasi address). All other should come to the old address—you may be sure, I think, no letter will be actually intercepted on this side. By the way, please let us know whether Mr. B. P. received a letter from A. enclosing another to P.S.

I have not written all this time, because I was not allowed to put pen to paper for some time—that is all. I send enclosed a letter to our M. Friend. If he can give you anything, please send this without the least delay. If not, I must ask you to procure for me by will-power or any other power in heaven or on earth Rs. 50/- at east as a loan. If you cannot get it elsewhere, why not apply to B. Babu ? Also if V. is in Calcutta, ask him whether V. gentleman can let me have anything. I was told he had Rs. 300/- put aside for me if I wanted it, but I do not wish to apply to him except in case of necessity. The situation just now is that we have Rs. 1/2 or so in hand. S. A. is without money Mr. A. C. B. living on nothing a month means an uncertain quantity. The only other man is P. whom I could at present ask for help but who is absent "sine die" and my messenger to the South has not returned. The last time he came, he brought a promise of Rs. 1000/-in a month and some permanent provision afterwards, but the promise like certain predecessors, may not yet be fulfilled and we send him for cash. But though he should have been here three days ago, he has not returned and even when he returns, I am not quite sure about the cash and still less sure about the sufficiency of the amount. No doubt God will provide, but He has contracted a bad habit of waiting till the last moment.

I only hope He does not wish us to learn how to live on a minus quantity, like B.

Other difficulties are disappearing, the case brought against the Swadeshis (no one in this household was included in it, although we had a very charming polite visit from Parquet and Judge d'Instruction) has collapsed into the nether region and the complainant and his son have fled from P; T; and become like ourselves "political refugees" in C'lore. I hear he has been sentenced to five years imprisonment for false accusation, but don't know yet whether the report is true. The police were to have left at the end of Pondicherry, but a young lunatic (one of B's old disciples in patriotism and atheism) got involved in a sedition search (for the Indian Sociologist and all rubbish in the world) and came running here in the nick of time for the police to claim another two months holiday in Pondicherry. However, I think fangs have been drawn, I may possibly send you the facts of the case for publication in the Nayak and other paper, but I am not yet certain.

I shall write to you about sadhana etc. another time—Kali."

That there had been a search in St. Louis House can be seen from Sri Aurobindo's letter to Motilal Roy dated 3rd July 1912. He writes there about the escape of Mayuresan to Cuddalore.

1912

Once it transpired that the French Government might yield to the pressure of the British Government in the matter of handing over the political refugees. This was a very crucial time for all of them. Subramanya Bharati got very much excited and disturbed, as was usual with his nature, over this news. One day he came all excited and agitated and asked Sri Aurobindo what he proposed to do in case the French Government did not shield them. He asked, "Do you not prefer to go out of India in that case ? What is your view?" Sri Aurobindo turned his back to him and sat quiet for a few minutes and then turned to him again and said, "Mr. Bharati ! I am not going to budge an inch from Pondicherry. I know nothing will happen to me. As for yourself you can do what you like."

After that he sat silent in his chair. Bharati and others dropped

the idea of going either to Jibuti, or Indo China or Tripoli which was in their minds.

1913

From April, 1913 Sri Aurobindo changed his residence from St. Louis Street to Mission Street on rent of Rs. 15/- per month. The reason of the change was economic stress.

From October 1913 he changed to 41, Rue François Martin (which became No. 10 afterwards). This house afterwards in 1914 became the office of "Arya", the monthly magazine. Sri Aurobindo remained in that house up to October 1922.

1913 November, December

An incident which took place in this house during November.-December is worth noting. One Nagen Nag, a cousin of Bijoy Kumar Nag, who was suffering from T.B. came to Pondicherry in the month of July or so. The doctors had advised him to try a change of climate near sea side as a stay in the hills did not profit him. Bijoy persuaded him to come to Pondicherry so that he may be near the sea side and also may profit by Sri Aurobindo's spiritual help. Nagen's coming partly eased the economic strain. They changed the house and hired 41, Rue François Martin house as being more lighted and well ventilated. There was up till now no furniture worth the name. There was no bedding; only mats were being used with pillows. There were only two chairs, one of which Sri Aurobindo used while writing and another outside which he used while receiving someone or giving an interview. Only one writing table and one camp-cot were there. The canvass of the camp-cot got torn on one side. So Sri Aurobindo carefully used to lie down on the untorn side and sleep ! !

With Nagen Nag a servant called Birendranath Roy had also come. He was the cook, the provision supplier and in general the manager of the household. After coming to Pondicherry this Biren became the general manager, cook etc. of Sri Aurobindo's house also. Being a Bengali, he became, like others, a member of the household. After they had all lived in Rue François Martin No. 41

for some months, one day Biren got his head completely shaved. Suresh Chakravarty—alias Moni—got a fancy to get himself also a similar complete shave. Generally, Moni was known to be very keen on dressing well and on keeping a good appearance. Biren tried to dissuade him but Moni was insistent and carried out his resolve.

This was or looked like an accident. But its result was very strange. This Biren was in fact a secret agent of the Bengal Government and as he had joined Nagen Nag at Khulna there was no chance of any suspicion being aroused against him. Biren wanted to return to Bengal as he had passed six to eight months at Pondicherry. He had requested the Police Department to send a substitute and the new man was shortly expected. The arrangement was that the new man should come to Magrie Hotel and then meet Biren. As there were four or five Bengalis living with Sri Aurobindo, Biren had given in the letter his identification as the man with the shaven head, for, if the new man inquires about Biren perhaps the fact of their being secret agents would be known !

So, when Moni got a clean shave of his head, Biren felt sure that all the inmates staying with Sri Aurobindo knew him as a secret agent, because otherwise Moni would not get himself shaved in spite of his dissuading him.

From that day he got frightened and was very much depressed. He sometimes went for a walk to the sea-side with Moni and used to ask his advice as to what he should do as he did not like to continue staying in Pondicherry. Moni used to tell him to return to Bengal and not be anxious about Nagen. Biren used to conclude from this that Moni was pulling his legs and pretending that he did not know that he was a secret agent.

In these early years of stay at Pondicherry there used to be wine sittings when some friend was generous or when finances permitted by economising other items. One day there was such a sitting, and all were talking and it was about ten or eleven in the night when Biren did something extraordinary ! He declared that he wanted to say something quite startling to the company. The atmosphere was rather light, so all believed that it might be some joke, or something to be laughed at. They all asked him to come out with it.

He said : "I am a C.I.D." ! No one believed him in the whole company; all began to laugh. Biren thought that the company knowing already the fact, was only fooling him. So he said, "You do not seem to believe but I am just going to bring the money I have received." He went down and brought Rs. 50/ ; he embraced every one who was present and at last sat down at the feet of Sri Aurobindo and offered him the money ! He assured Sri Aurobindo that he had not made any report against him or anyone else. He was very much moved and began to weep.

The whole atmosphere changed and became serious. Sri Aurobindo did not say anything. Biren remained sometime after this but he was afraid and used to close the doors of his room while he slept. He went to Bengal in about a month. He went away to Mesopotamia in the first world-war so that the revolutionaries may not take their revenge upon him ! At last he left the Police Department in 1921-1922.

It shows how the atmosphere in those days was full of suspicion and also how great was the number of secret agents in Pondicherry. The way in which Biren's confession came out is a miracle.

1913

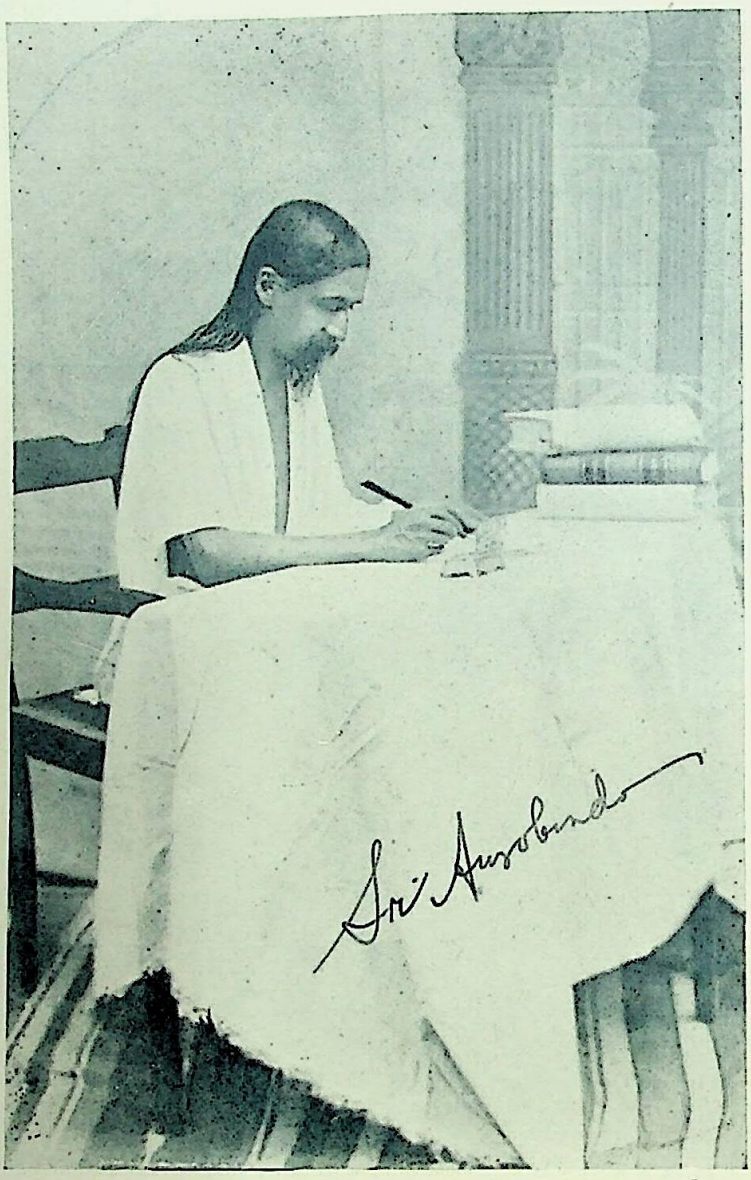
During this year Motilal Roy came to Pondicherry incognito. He remained a month and a half at No. 10 Rue François Martin with Sri Aurobindo. He went back by steamer as there was apprehension of his being arrested at Madras.

August 15

August 15 was celebrated in the Mission Street house. Sri Aurobindo was not well on that day, he had fever. But he came out and sat in the Verandah and all those who had come passed before him. Moni had composed a poem which he read. Sri Aurobindo liked it and gave him a garland.

V. Ramaswamy (Va. Ra) who was with Sri Aurobindo went away to Tanjore in 1913.

From Mission Street house to Rue François Martin house the change was made in October 1913. Biren episode took place in Rue François Martin house.



Sri Aurobindo
(*Pondicherry: 1919 - 1920*)

Motilal Roy was sending money to Sri Aurobindo. It was easy for him to send money from Chandernagore. So some revolutionaries used to give him money to send to Sri Aurobindo. He was also publishing all the Bengali and some English books of Sri Aurobindo. Durgadas Seth, a monied man of Chandernagore was reported to have given large sums of money to Motilal Roy to send them to Sri Aurobindo.

K. Amrita used to stay at Pondicherry in vacation. He was in economic difficulties and had to stop his studies. Sri Aurobindo in spite of his own difficulties helped him with money and then used his influence to get him helped by some well known people in Madras. He was able to go up to matriculation. Sri Aurobindo used to read to him sometimes Browning, Kalidas, Shakespeare and portions from Mahabharat. At times he used to read his own poem "Savitri" and one act drama "Henrick".

February 1914

Moni, Nolini and Saurin went to Bengal, they returned in September, 1914.

March 29th at 3-30 the Mother met Sri Aurobindo at No. 10 Rue Francois Martin. Her age at that time was 37. Paul Richard and the Mother remained in Pondicherry. Sri Aurobindo was persuaded to start a philosophical magazine in order to give to the world his grand synthesis of knowledge and yogic experience in terms of rational exposition. It was decided to start it on the 15th of August, Sri Aurobindo's birthday. The first issue appeared on August 15, 1914.

Once Sri Aurobindo wrote to some disciple about the *Arya*: "It will be the intellectual side of my work for the world."

In a letter to Dilip, he said :— "And philosophy ! Let me tell you in confidence that I never, never was a philosopher—although I have written philosophy which is another story altogether. I knew precious little about philosophy, before I did the yoga and came to Pondicherry, I was a poet and a politician not a philosopher ! How I managed to do it and why ? First, because Richard proposed to me to co-operate in a philosophical review and as my

theory was that a yogi ought to be able to turn his hand to anything I could not very well refuse; and then he had to go to the war and left me in the lurch with sixty four pages of philosophy all to write by my lonely self. Secondly, because I had to write down in the terms of the intellect all that I had observed and come to know in practising yoga daily, and philosophy was there automatically. But that is not being a philosopher !!"

4-9-1934

In order to spread the idea in France a French publication called "Revue de la Grande Synthèse" was simultaneously published. But the first world war intervened and after seven issues the French magazine was discontinued.

It is clear from his letter quoted above (4-9-1934) that "Arya" was not written from the intellect though it was written *for* it.

The aim of "Arya" as declared by Sri Aurobindo was :—

"Its object is to feel out for the thought of the future, to help in shaping its foundations and to link it to the best and most vital thought of the past".

"The earth is a world of *Life* and Matter, but man is not a vegetable nor an animal, he is a spiritual and thinking being who is set here to shape and use the animal mould for higher purposes, by higher motives, with a more divine instrumentation."

"The problem of thought is to find out the right idea and the right way of harmony; to restate the ancient and eternal spiritual truth of Self so that it shall re-embrace, permeate and dominate the mental and physical life; to develop the most profound and vital methods of psychological self-discipline and self-development so that the mental and psychical life of man may express the spiritual life through the utmost possible expansion of its own riches, power and complexity; and to seek for the means and motives by which his external life, his society and his institutions may remould themselves progressively in the truth of the spirit and develop towards the utmost possible harmony of individual freedom and social unity".

This is our ideal and our search in the "Arya."

"Philosophy is the intellectual search for the fundamental truth of things, religion is the attempt to make the truth dynamic in the soul of man. They are essential to each other.

"Our first preoccupation in the "Arya" has therefore been with the deepest thought that we could command on the philosophical foundations of the problem; and we have been so profoundly convinced that without this basis nothing we could say would have any real, solid and permanent value that we have perhaps given too great a space to difficult and abstruse thought...."

1914

Sri Aurobindo used to correct the proofs and see that they were dispatched regularly on the 15th of every month. It was printed at Modern Press, Pondicherry. He used to write the matter or at times to type straight on the type-writer. At night sometimes he would go on typing the articles straight for the press.

1914

As mentioned already Moni, Nolini, and Saurin returned in September from Bengal. Saurin was given charge of the "Arya" office, Moni was managing the house and the kitchen. "Arya" office was in the house where Mother was staying. In the beginning "Arya" had two hundred subscribers.

During the year (1914) the Mother used to come every day between 4 and 4-30 to Sri Aurobindo's house and bring sweets prepared from coconut. Moni and Nolini and others used to go for playing football at 5 o'clock. The Mother used to prepare cocoa for Sri Aurobindo. Richard used to come up and join.

Every Sunday there was standing invitation to Sri Aurobindo and all the members of the house, for dinner at Mother's house. Sri Aurobindo used to go to the Mother's house (which was very near) at about 4-30 in the afternoon and other members joined after coming from the football ground. The talk used to be prolonged and often they returned at 9 or 10 at night.

1914

Bijoy Nag started from Pondicherry (after August) for Calcutta. At Villupuram he was taken in custody under the Defence of Indian Act promulgated after the war. He was taken to Calcutta and kept in "A" class confinement till the end of the war.

1914

Sri Aurobindo translated in English verse. C.R. Das's "Sagar Sangit" for which the latter sent Rs. 1000/-

Money from the sale of Murari Pukur Bagan also seems to have reached Sri Aurobindo during this year.

A letter was written to Motilal Roy asking him to stop all political activities.

"Pravartak" began publication with a view to put Sri Aurobindo's ideals before Bengal. After 1920 when Motilal Roy separated from Sri Aurobindo it became the mouthpiece of the Sangh at Chandernagore of which he was the leader.

The daily routine during this year was: reading (the "Hindu") at nine o'clock and meeting persons who may have come to see him. This was the only difference in the programme of previous years.

Lunch time was between 12 and 12-30. In the evening at 4 o'clock Bharati and at five V.V.S. Aiyar, Srinivasachari used to come and remain till 8 o'clock by which time Nolini would return from the football ground. Night meal was taken at 9 o'clock.

II. 1914—1920

Events from 1914 to 1920 have not been available in a connected form, in fact, it is very difficult to get them. Whatever has been found is presented here :

After 1913, Sri Aurobindo very rarely went out to see persons, or attend functions. The occasions on which he went out between 1913 and 1920 are as follows :—

1. To the house of Joseph David (afterwards Mayor of Pondicherry) on the occasion of his marriage (1914 ?)
2. Occasion of the marriage of Sada Oudiyar, a supervisor in the Jail, a Tamil Christian.
3. He met one Mr. Shastri, a man of letters, twice or thrice.
4. A visit to the house, 2nd Line Beach, where Motilal Roy stayed—(1920 ?)
5. A visit to Joseph David's place on the occasion of his. daughter's baptism.
6. Visited Srinivasachari's place on the occasion of his daughter's marriage 1912.
7. Attended the opening ceremony of the "Aryan Stores" 1916.

After 1920, Sri Aurobindo paid no visits to anyone. In fact, he went out of the house only when he changed his residence.

From 1913 to 1920, Sri Aurobindo was staying in 41, Rue François Martin, with four or five young men. In those days, there was no separate bath-room. There was one tap in the open court-yard. The inmates took bath under the tap.

Sri Aurobindo used to take his bath last, a few minutes before lunch. He used the same tap. The one towel used by the inmates of the house served him also !

During these years, it seems, Sri Aurobindo led his daily life under some ideal. At one time it was freedom of the individual and democracy. He used to carry out the dominating ideal in the details of his life. So he considered everyone else his equal and acted accordingly. Once his foot touched Amrita's inadvertently. Sri Aurobindo sat up in the chair and said, "I beg your pardon".

The "Arya" was being printed at the Modern Press. Sometimes the proofs were delayed because the compositor used to drink. When the proofs arrived late Amrita used to scold him for drinking. Once Sri Aurobindo came out of his room on hearing the talk and said :—

"You have no right to interfere in his personal life. It is meaningless to advise him. He has perfect freedom to drink. What you should tell him is to observe the terms of the contract and give proofs regularly".

At that time democracy was dominant in his mind.

1915 : "Arya" was being brought out regularly.

On February 22nd, 1915—Mother had to go to France on account of the World-War I.

February 21st, the Mother's birthday was celebrated here for the first time.

1916 : In September "Aryan Stores" was opened on Rue Dupleix. —The shop was in the Bazar. The capital for it was given by the Mother. Saurin Bose was looking after the management.

Haradhan Baxi of Chandernagore was now in Pondicherry undergoing training for the army to join forces in France in the first World-War. He used to visit the house and meet Sri Aurobindo.

Khasirao Jadhava came to Pondicherry and met Sri Aurobindo. He was put up in the Magrie Hotel.

1917 : "Arya" continued its publication regularly. No information available of other activities or incidents during this year.

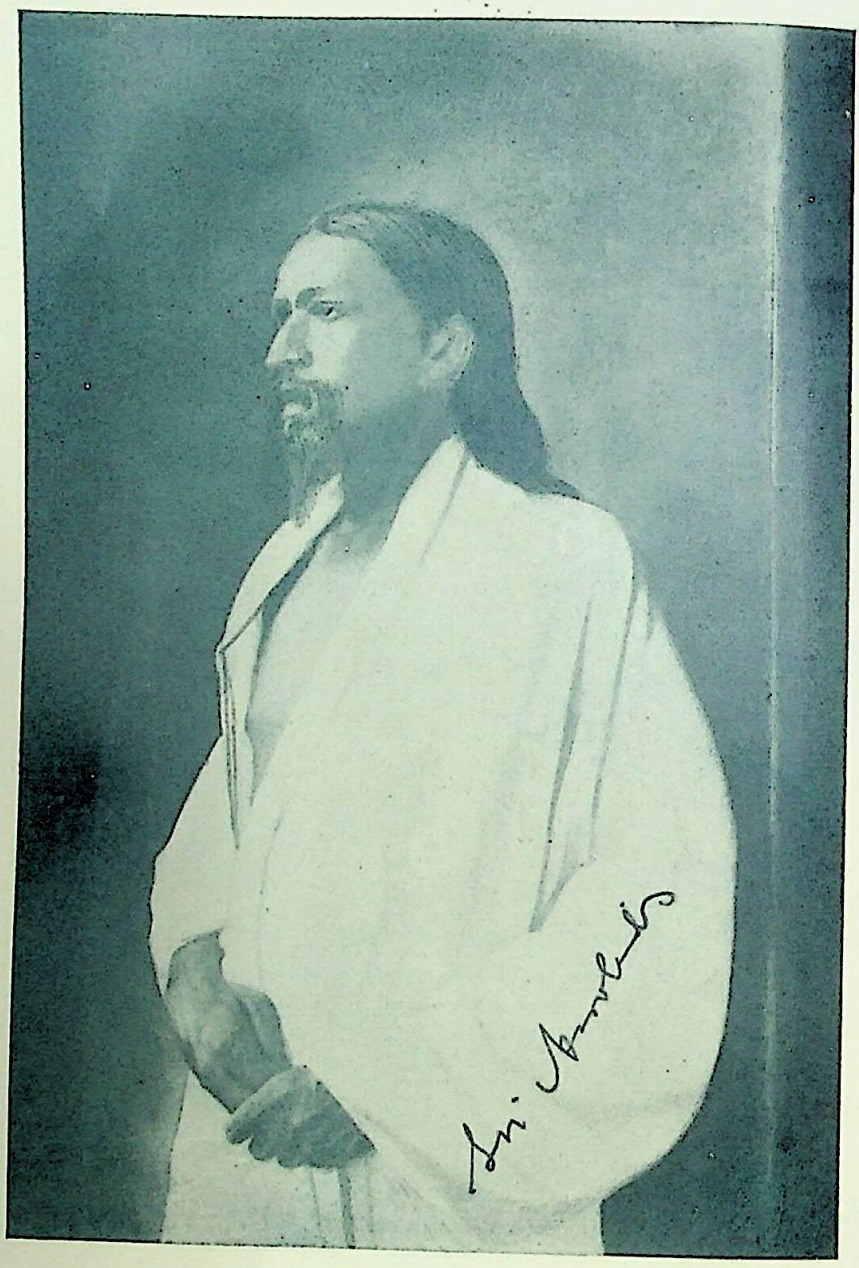
1918 : December : Mrinalini Devi died of influenza. "Arya" was regularly published this year.

Chandra Shekhar Ayya, an Andhra intellectual, was staying in Pondicherry and meeting the inmates of the house and Sri Aurobindo.

Purani met Sri Aurobindo at the end of December. He had correspondence with Sri Aurobindo since 1914. Amrita and Moni —Suresh Chakravarty—were in the house. During the interview (1) need for monitary help was broached, (2) the question of Indian struggle for independence and permission to start revolutionary action. Sri Aurobindo's advice (see appendix) 3. Spiritual Sadhana.

1919 : Amrita came to stay in Pondicherry with Sri Aurobindo. S. Duraiswamy Aiyar, advocate of Madras, J. Nambiar and Mrinalini Chattopadhyaya came to see Sri Aurobindo.

In 1918 the British Government had declared the Montague Chelmsford Reforms. Mrs. Besant wrote pressing letters to Sri Aurobindo to give out his opinion about the Reforms. As he had retired outwardly from political activity he did not allow his name to be published, but sent an article signed : "An Indian Nationalist". In that article he described them as "Chinese Puzzle" and "a great shadow".



Sri Aurobindo
(*Pondicherry: 1916*)

When K. Amrita came in his vacation from Madras, he and Bijoy Nag, who stayed with Sri Aurobindo, usually spent long hours talking to Sri Aurobindo. But this did not disturb his Sadhana. When he was asked about it he said that outer conditions had ceased to have any influence on his Sadhana. His Sadhana was not interrupted even when he was writing the "Arya"; in fact, it was a part of his own yoga.

Sometimes during 1919 and 1920 Sri Aurobindo used to get irritation of the right eye and it became red. Those who stayed with him attributed this trouble to cigar which he smoked in those days.

One day at 8 o'clock in the evening the eye was swollen. He told the inmates of the house that the swelling would go down after two hours. Then, as usual with him, he began walking to and fro and meditating. After two hours the eye was normal. He always believed that swelling had nothing to do with the cigar—at least in his case.

From 1924 even occasional drinking was given up and in 1926 he gave up smoking in one day.

1919 : Mukul Chandra De, who became afterwards Principal of the Calcutta School of Art, came to Pondicherry and met Sri Aurobindo. He took sittings for four days in order to draw a portrait. The result was not very successful.

1920 : January 5 : Sri Aurobindo replied to Joseph Baptista's letter. Joseph Baptista was a well-known nationalist barrister of Bombay and a leader of the party. He belonged to Tilak's party. After 1907 the nationalist party grew stronger every year and at the end of 1919 the party thought of bringing out a paper from Bombay. According to Tilak's advice the Socialist Democratic Party of Bombay invited Sri Aurobindo through Baptista to accept the editorship of the paper. The idea was that this would afford Sri Aurobind an opportunity to return to politics, and the nationalist party would get his valuable support. It was well known in nationalist circles that Tilak and Sri Aurobindo had the same political ideology so far as the question of Indian freedom was concerned. The reply of Sri Aurobindo is reproduced here in full.

Pondicherry,
January 5, 1926

Dear Baptista,

Your offer is a tempting one, but I regret that I cannot answer it in the affirmative. It is due to you that I should state explicitly my reasons. In the first place I am not prepared at present to return to British India. This is quite apart from any political obstacle. I understand that up to last September the Government of Bengal (and probably the Government of Madras also) were opposed to my return to British India and that practically this opposition meant that if I went back I should be interned or imprisoned under one or other of the beneficent Acts which are apparently still to subsist as helps in ushering in the new era of trust and co-operation. I do not suppose other Governments could any more be delighted by my appearance in their respective provinces. Perhaps the King's Proclamation may make a difference, but that is not certain, since as I read it, it also does not mean an amnesty, but an act of gracious concession and benevolence limited by the discretion of the Viceroy. Now I have too much work on my hand to waste my time in the leisured ease of an involuntary Government guest. But even if I were assured of an entirely free action and movement, I should yet not go just now. I came to Pondicherry in order to have freedom and tranquillity for a fixed object having nothing to do with present politics in which I have taken no direct part since my coming here, though what I could do for the country in my own way I have constantly done, and until it is accomplished it is not possible for me to resume any kind of public action. But if I were in British India, I should be obliged to plunge at once into action of different kinds.

Pondicherry is my place of retreat, my cave of Tapasya—not of the ascetic kind, but of a brand of my own invention. I must finish that, I must be internally armed and equipped for my work before I leave it.

Next in the matter of the work itself. I do not at all look down on politics or political action or consider I have got above them. I always laid a dominant stress and I now lay an entire stress on the spiritual life, but my idea of spirituality has nothing to do with

ascetic withdrawal or contempt or disgust of secular things. There is to me nothing secular, all human activity is for me a thing to be included in a complete spiritual life, and the importance of politics at the present time is very great. But my line and intention of political activity could differ considerably from anything now current in the field. I entered into political action and continued it from 1903 to 1910 with one aim alone, to get into the mind of the people a settled will for freedom and the necessity of a struggle to achieve it in place of the futile rumbling Congress methods till then in vogue. That is now done and the Amritsar Congress is the seal upon it. The will is not as practical and compact nor by any means as organised and sustained in action as it should be, but there is the will and plenty of strong and able leaders to guide it. I consider that in spite of the inadequacy of the Reforms the will to self-determination, if the country keeps its present temper, as I have no doubt it will, is bound to prevail before long. What preoccupies me now is the question what it is going to do with its self-determination, how will it use its freedom, on what lines is it going to determine its future ?

You may ask why not come out and help myself so far as I can in giving a lead ? But my mind has a habit of running inconveniently ahead of the times,—some might say, out of tune altogether into the world of the ideal. Your party, you say, is going to be a social democratic party. Now I believe in something which might be called social democracy, but not in any of the forms now current, and I am not altogether in love with the European kind, however great an improvement it may be on the past. I hold that India having a spirit of her own and a governing temperament proper to her own civilization, should in politics as in every thing else strike out her own original path and not stumble in the wake of Europe. But this is precisely what she will be obliged to do, if she has to start on the road in her present chaotic and unprepared condition of mind. No doubt people talk of India developing on her own lines, but nobody seems to have very clear or sufficient ideas as to what those lines are to be. In this matter I have formed ideals and certain definite ideas of my own, in which at present very few are likely to follow me, since they are governed by an uncompromising spiritual idealism of an unconventional kind and would be unintelligible to many

and an offence and stumbling-block to a great number. But I have not as yet any clear and full idea of the practical lines; I have no formed programme. In a word, I am feeling my way in my mind and am not ready for either propaganda or action. Even if I were, it would mean for some time ploughing my lonely furrow or at least freedom to take my own way. As the editor of your paper, I shall be bound to voice the opinion of others and reserve my own, and while I have full sympathy with the general ideas of the advanced parties so far as concerns the action of the present moment and, if I were in the field would do all I could to help them, I am almost incapable by nature of limiting myself in that way, at least to the extent that would be requisite.

Excuse the length of this screed. I thought it necessary to explain fully so as to avoid giving you the impression that I declined your request from any affection or reality of spiritual aloofness or wish to shirk the call of the country or want of sympathy with the work you and others are so admirably doing. I repeat my regret that I am compelled to disappoint you.

Yours sincerely,
AUROBINDO GHOSE

1920

During this year it became customary for the inmates of the house and a few outsiders to meet Sri Aurobindo between 4 and 4-30 in the evening. He used to come out at his convenience. During the sitting general talk without any formality took place, —some public event, or an article in the paper, a point concerning Sadhana. At times humorous and light topics also came up, so were some evenings full of natural silence verging on meditation.

Saurin Bose who had gone to Bengal did not return—he and Nolini Kanto married in 1919. The Aryan Stores of which Saurin Bose was in charge was sold to Partha Sarathy Chetty (He wound up the business in 1932).

April 7 : Sri Aurobindo's letter to Barin, known as "Pondicherir Patra" in Bengali. When Barin was released from Andamans in 1919, after the armistice, he wrote a letter to Sri Aurobindo in which he

asked several questions and stated some of his own views. The reply clarifies many points. Relevant questions are given here :

Letter to Barin

7th April 1920

First about your Yoga. You wish to give me the charge of your Yoga, and I am willing to take it, that is to say to give it to Him who is moving by his divine Shakti both you and myself whether secretly or openly. But you must know the necessary result will be that you will have to follow that special way which He has given to me and which I call the integral Yoga.

What I began with, what was given to me by Lele, that was a seeking for the path, a wandering around in this and that direction touching this or that in all the old partial Yogas.

Afterwards when I came to Pondicherry, this unsteady condition ceased. The Guru of the world who is within us gave me the complete direction of my path, its full theory, the ten limbs of the body of the Yoga.

These ten years He had been making me develop it in experience. But it is not yet finished.

The Brahman, the Self, God, are always there. What God wants of man is to embody Him, here in the individual and the community, to realise God in life.

If one cannot rise above, that is to the Supramental level, it is hardly possible to know the last secret of the world. The problem of the world does not get solved.

The physical body, the life, the mind and understanding, the Supermind and the Ananda, these are the spirit's five levels. The higher we rise the nearer we get to the condition of the highest perfection of Man's spiritual evolution. By rising to the Supermind it becomes easy to rise to the Ananda. There is a firm foundation in the condition of the indivisible and infinite Ananda. Not only in the timeless Akshara Brahman, but in the body, in life, in the world. The full being, the full Consciousness, the full Ananda, blossoms out and takes form in life. That is the *central clue* of my Yoga, its fundamental word.

This it is not easy to become. After these fifteen years I am

only now rising into the lowest of the three levels of the Supermind and trying to draw up into it all the lower activities. But when this Siddhi will be complete then I am absolutely certain that God will through me give Siddhi of the Supermind to others with less difficulty. Then my real work will begin. I am not impatient for success in the work. What is to happen will happen in God's appointed time. I am not disposed to run wildly and leap into the field of work in the strength of my little ego. If even I did not get success in my work I would not be shaken. This work is not mine but God's. I will listen to no other call, when God moves me then I will move.

All these are the signs of the incompleteness and unripe condition.

This is the infancy or embryonic condition. It is the previous hint, not even the beginning.

I do not want a society founded on division. I want a Sangha which is the image of spiritual unity and founded on spirit. You will say, 'what is the need of Sangha, I will be free and remain in every vessel.' Let all become one without form, let whatever happen in the midst of the vast formlessness. That is true but only one side of the truth. Our business is not with the formless spirit. We have to keep life in motion. There is no effective motion of life without form. The taking of a life by the formless, the assumption of name and form is not a caprice of Maya. It was needed. We do not want to leave anything of the world, Politics, Industry, Society, Poetry, Literature, Art, will all remain. But we shall have to give them a new soul and a new form.

People now talk of spiritualising Politics. Its result will be, if there be any permanent result, some kind of Indianised Bolshevism. To that kind of work also I have no objection. Let each man do according to his inspiration. But that is not the real thing. If one pours the spiritual power into all these impure forms, the water of the causal ocean into a raw vessel—either that raw thing will break and the water be spilt and lost or the spiritual power will evaporate and only the impure form remain. In all fields it is the same. I can give the spiritual power but that power will be expended in making the image of an ape and setting it up in the temple of Shiva. If the ape is made powerful by the putting of life into it he may play the part of the devotee Hanuman and do much work for Rama,

so long as that life and that power remains. But what we want in the Temple of India is not Hanuman, but the God, the Avatar Rama himself.

I can mix with all, but in order to draw all into the true path keeping intact the spirit and form of our ideal. If we do not do that, we shall lose our direction and the real work will not be done. If we remain individually everywhere, something will be done indeed, but if we remain everywhere, as parts of a Sangha, a hundred times more will be done. As yet that time has not come. If we try to give a form hastily, it may not be the exact thing we want. The Sangha will be at first an unconcentrated form. Those who have the ideal will be united but work in different places. Afterwards giving it some form like a spiritual commune and making a complete Sangha, they will give all their work a shape according to the growth and need of the age—not a bound and rigid form. Not an Achalayatana but a free form which will spread out like the sea, take different wave forms and surround this, overflood that, take all into itself. As we go on doing this there will be established a spiritual community, This is my present idea. As yet it has not been fully developed all is in God's hands, whatever he makes us do that we shall.

You write about the *Deva-Sangha* "I am not a God, I am only some much hammered and refined iron." No one is God but in each man there is a God and to make him manifest is the aim of divine life. That we can all do.

I do not want hundreds of thousands of disciples. It will be enough if I can get a hundred complete men, empty of petty egoism, who will be instruments of God.

If the unripe goes amidst the unripe what work can he do ?"

These two letters—one to Baptista and another to Barin—are written in the beginning of 1920. They serve to clarify Sri Aurobindo's life-mission as it was taking shape in his own consciousness. This point of view towards politics, his aim during his participation in it and the affirmation of a spiritual mission—these are clearly set forth in his letter to Baptista.

In his letter to Barin he speaks of the action of a spiritual Power in him since 1910, he affirms his identity with the Power and the statement that realisation of God is only beginning in his Yoga, the need of ascent to and descent of the Supramental con-

sciousness on earth—in man is the real key to the solution of human problems, these points are clear. He stresses also the need, in the same letter, of establishing a collective life based on the Spirit and in order to accomplish his mission he wants to wait till the work is integrally done in himself.

1920

May-June : Mrinalini Chattopadhyaya, S. Durai Swamy Aiyar, J. Nambiar came to Pondicherry. It was during this time that the Mother began to put on Sari—Mrinalini initiated her into it.

15th August : Beginning of the "Standard Bearer", a weekly from Chandernagore. The paper stopped after some time. In fact, the inner spiritual connection between Chandernagore and Pondicherry ended on the side of Sri Aurobindo. The "Pravartak Sangha" after this time became the activity of the Sadhaks at Chandernagore under Motilal Roy's leadership.

1920

Barin came to meet Sri Aurobindo. Ullaskar Dutt, one of the revolutionaries, also came to Pondicherry,—at the end of this year or in the beginning of 1921.

Some one who was managing one of the two houses included cigars in the list of necessary articles. This was brought to Sri Aurobindo's notice. He said : "Oil, soap and such other articles besides food may be considered necessary; but cigar is not a necessity,"—it was stopped.

There was some complaint about the food—especially about its taste. When it was taken to him he said to the Sadhak : "You should have no preference for food of a particular kind of taste. There is no truth in such preferences and demands. You have a body, and you have to keep it in good condition. Lower quality or kind of food would be harmful to the health of the body, therefore you should take good quality of food material. But "good food" means food necessary for the body,—not what the tongue likes".

As for himself, he took whatever food was given to him for many years. He never said anything about the taste of the food.

The cooking, in those days, was done by Paria Cooks and the food often used to have very bad taste. Sometimes some one from the inmates would remark after meals—"Today there was no salt in the curry"—Sri Aurobindo would answer, "Yes, today there was no salt"—It is not that he was oblivious of the taste but that he had by Sadhana cultivated perfect samata, equality, even in his sense of taste. He used to say that it is possible, to experience "equal delight"—sama ananda—from all kinds of taste of food.

After the Mother had taken charge there was a complete change in the house management. She took charge of the kitchen. Arrangement was made upstairs for Sri Aurobindo's bath.

1920

The Mother came to India, second time, on April 24th 1920.

November : The Mother came to stay in No. 41, Rue François Martin—the house in which Sri Aurobindo lived.

It happened like this : In the beginning the Mother was staying at the Magrie's hotel; after that she changed to Subbu's hotel in Rue St Louis—near Rue François Martin. From there she moved to the house No. 1—in the Second Line Beach.

On Nov. 24, 1920: There was a great tempest followed by heavy rainfall. Water began to leak from the terraced roof of the house and rain had not abated. In the early part of the evening, the roof of a godown in Rue d'Orleans, opposite to the Vinayak temple, collapsed due to heavy percolation of water in the roof. Sri Aurobindo came to know about the leaking of water in the house where Mother was staying with Datta. In order to avoid unpleasant accident he considered it safer for them to remove to No. 41, Rue François Martin at least as a precautionary measure. The removal began at eight in the evening and went on till midnight. The remainder of articles was removed next day morning. Ever since the Mother remained in the same house with Sri Aurobindo.

Six years after the day that became known as the Siddhi-day fell on the same date, 24th of November (1926). The date seems to be as significant an event as his birthday, 15th of August.

At the end of this year W. W. Pearson came from Shantiniketan and met the Mother.

James H. Cousins came to Pondicherry at the end of this year and met the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

It was at the end of this year that the Mother wrote a few lines in a Magazine from Chandernagore in reply to a request about: "How I became conscious of my mission".

The Letter

"When and how did I become conscious of a mission, which I was to fulfil on earth ? And when and how I met Sri Aurobindo ?"

These two questions you have asked me and I promised a short reply.

For the knowledge of the mission, it is difficult to say when it came to me. It is as though I was born with it, and following the growth of the mind and brain, the precision and completeness of this consciousness grew also.

Between 11 and 13 a series of psychic and spiritual experiences revealed to me not only the existence of God but man's possibility of meeting with Him, or revealing Him integrally in consciousness and action, of manifesting Him upon earth in a life divine. This along with a practical discipline for its fulfilment, was given to me, during my body's sleep, by several teachers some of whom I met afterwards on the physical plane. Later on, as the interior and exterior development proceeded, the spiritual and physical relation with one of these beings became more and more clear and pregnant, and although I knew little of the Indian philosophies and religions at that time, I was led to call him Krishna and henceforth I was aware that it was with him (whom I should meet on earth one day) that the divine work was to be done.

In the year 1910, my husband came alone to Pondicherry where under very interesting and peculiar circumstances, he made the acquaintance of Sri Aurobindo. Since then we both strongly wished to return to India, the country which I had always cherished as my true mother-country and in 1914 this joy was granted to us.

As soon as I saw Sri Aurobindo, I recognised him as the well-known being whom I used to call Krishna...and this is enough to explain why I am fully convinced that my place and my work are near him in India.

THE MOTHER

1920 After September Moni and Nolini went to Bengal. Sri Aurobindo went to the station to see them off. There was an inner upheaval in the house after the Mother's arrival.

Dr. Munje came to Pondicherry and met Sri Aurobindo remaining as his guest. He had long talks on current Indian politics with Sri Aurobindo.

Avinash Bhattacharya, a co-worker in the "Vande Mataram" days came and stayed in Pondicherry for a month and more.

Most probably in June or July of this year, Amarendranath Chatterji of Uttarpara, who was initiated into the revolutionary organisation by Sri Aurobindo, came incognito to the South. He travelled as a Sadhu and visited Trichinapally, Tanjore, and other places. He came to Pondicherry as a Sadhu to see Sri Aurobindo.

At the time there were a number of persons staying in Sri Aurobindo's house: Mother, Hrishikesh—afterwards known as Vishuddhananda Giri—Motilal Roy, Rameshwar De, Natwardas, Amrita, Barin, Datta—Miss Hudson.

Amarendra's assumed name was Swami Kevalananda. He had grown matted hair on the head, and came with iron tongs and staff in his hands. He was unrecognisable. He came to 41, Rue François Martin but nobody could make out who he was. At last, after sometime he called Natwardas and disclosed to him his identity in low tone. Moti Roy came to know about him, rushed to him, embraced and took him upstairs where Sri Aurobindo was staying. Precautions had to be taken so that the other Sadhus who came with him should not know Amarendra.

Sri Aurobindo had given him the name "Gabriel" in the revolutionary group. So Moti Babu knocked at his door telling him that "Gabriel" had come.

Sri Aurobindo came out and said: "Good Lord!" There was meeting and talking with all. For sometime Sri Aurobindo had been receiving reports from Tanjore, Trichinapally and other places that some Panjabi Sadhus had been preaching his ideas and philosophy. He was at a loss to make out who those Panjabi Sadhus could be. Now, when Amarendra came the question was solved.

The Sadhus were all put up in a Dharamshala, and Amar dined with the inmates of Sri Aurobindo's house at night. They all

departed the next morning. Sri Aurobindo advised Amarendra not to continue revolutionary activity.

We have already mentioned Motilal Roy's name in connection with Chandernagore. From 1910 to 1916 he rendered financial help to Sri Aurobindo at Pondicherry. He had taken initiation of Yoga from Sri Aurobindo. People who were sympathetic to revolutionary nationalism, or those who had regard for Sri Aurobindo often contacted Motilal Roy as it was easy for him to remit sums from Chandernagore to Pondicherry, both being French possessions. In between individuals like K.V. Rangaswamy Aiyangar also helped. Men from Calcutta, Uttarpara, Falta and from East Bengal found it convenient to render economic help through Motilal Roy. Durgadas Seth of Chandernagore gave substantial help.

A letter from Sri Aurobindo to Motilal Roy in 1912 gives some idea of the economic stress prevailing at Pondicherry. It may also be mentioned that, in return, all the Bengali works and some books in English also were being published by the Pravartak Sangha of Chandernagore.

During 1920 Sri Aurobindo called Motilal Roy for Sadhana under his direct guidance at Pondicherry. Barin also came to Pondicherry after his release from the Andamans. Motilal had been expecting that whenever Sri Aurobindo returned to British India to start his work in the external field he would go back to Bengal and particularly to Chandernagore. In fact, there was already a nucleus of collective life round Motilal Roy—the Pravartak Sangha—which came into being under Sri Aurobindo's inspiration. It seemed natural to expect that he would begin his work with the Centre at Chandernagore. Sri Aurobindo would be the knowledge-aspect and Motilal Roy the practical or the Karma-aspect.

When I went to Pondicherry in 1921 I had questioned Sri Aurobindo about the outer form that his work would take, and he had told me, "I have not yet arrived at the final aspect of the external work. But if you want to have some idea, you may see the work that is being done at Chandernagore by some people under my inspiration. I send my help to the leaders from here."

Following Sri Aurobindo's suggestion I paid a visit to Chandernagore on August 15, 1921. I met Motilal Roy. In response to Motilal's request the blessing which Sri Aurobindo sent was in

the form of a telegram: "Wish you the descent of Truth and Light". I mentioned during my interview with Moti Babu that I was asked by Sri Aurobindo to get an idea of the form of work from the Sangha at Chandernagore. Moti Babu told me: "Whenever I concentrate I see three lights like electric bulbs and I work with the help of inspiration of this Light".

On the 15th of August: Moti Babu told me that there had been a spiritual difference between him and Sri Aurobindo. When I went to Pondicherry in 1923 I heard the whole story of this difference from Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo: "I myself got the Idea of the Supramental after ten years of Sadhana. The Supramental does not come in the beginning but at the end of Sadhana. It is a progressive Truth".

Question: When you spoke of the Vital forces coming in the way of the Supramental work I suppose you had in your mind the work at Chandernagore; is it true?

Sri Aurobindo: "At that time (i.e. when the work was started at Chandernagore) I had some construction (mental) in my mind. Of course, there was something behind it which I knew to be true. Even then, I was not sure that it would work out successfully. Anyway, I wanted to give it a trial and so I gave to Motilal. Then he took up the idea and, as you know, he took it up with all his vital being and in the egoistic way and so the vital forces found their chance. They tried to take possession of the work.

As I told you, it is after several such lessons that I had to give up the idea of rushing into work. This Yoga is not a cut out system, it is a growth by experience and one has to grow by experience".

21st August, 1926

The Mother shifted to 41, François Martin on November 24, 1920 —the house in which Sri Aurobindo lived. This had created a sense of dissatisfaction in the minds of most of the inmates. Man is so much governed by his social, religious and cultural conventions that he finds it difficult to throw them out. Besides, men imbued with strong nationalism would find it difficult to accept one who apparently is a foreigner as an inmate of the house. Individuals like Sister Nivedita do not come to such minds in that state. In a Yoga

in which transformation of the nature is an integral element this difficulty becomes specially acute.

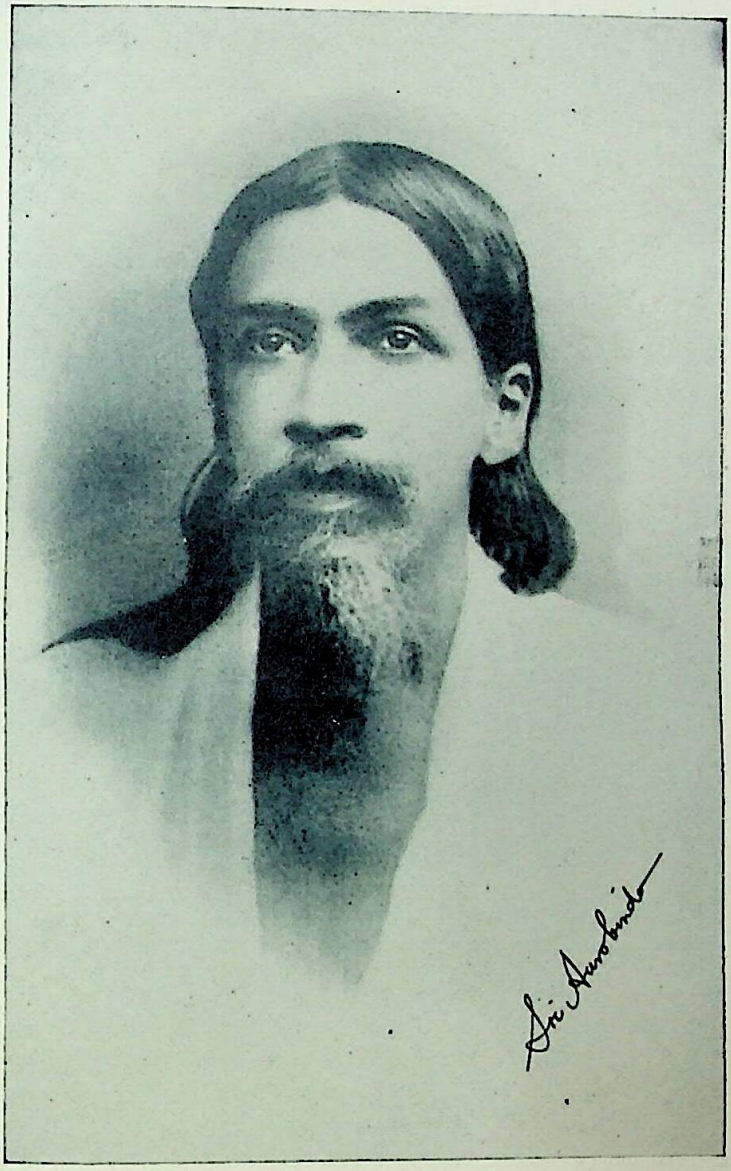
Motilal Roy did not like this change,—though he may not have been conscious of this dislike at that time. His difficulty arose from his sadhana. He was apprehensive that the Sangha which he had started after 1914 would not continue in his absence. It may be said he had a great attraction and attachment to the work he had started.

Sri Aurobindo had called him for intense spiritual Sadhana so as to bring about transformation of his nature. He came for that purpose. But letters from Chandernagore,—from Arun Chandra Dutt and others, used to arrive pressing him to return. The question became acute at the approach of the 15th of August. Moti Babu asked Sri Aurobindo what he should do, to which he replied that he must look within himself and get the guidance. After a few days Moti Babu had an experience in which he saw a black form of himself attacking him. When he met Sri Aurobindo again he asked him the significance of the experience. Sri Aurobindo said the significance was clear.

After this Moti Babu and his wife were in a fix : they could not decide about going to Chandernagore. Where to celebrate the 15th August, Sri Aurobindo's birthday,—at Pondicherry or at Chandernagore? At last, a telegram from Arun Chandra Dutt came : "Come immediately otherwise eternal separation". Moti Babu was very much disturbed. On the 10th of August night there was no possibility of seeing Sri Aurobindo, so he wrote a letter to him and left by the night train for Chandernagore.

This was the beginning of drifting away of Chandernagore from Sri Aurobindo. Of course, three or four times Moti Babu tried to have an interview with Sri Aurobindo, with a view to iron out differences. But as Sri Aurobindo did not see any real inner change he did not grant the request. "Commune, Culture and Commerce" became the motto of the Pravartak Sangha afterwards. Whatever spirituality there may be in the Sangha owes its origin to Sri Aurobindo. The form of the Sangha that has developed afterwards is the creation of Moti Babu and his associates.

As Pravartak Sangha is a well-known organisation of Bengal this explanation is considered necessary.



Sri Aurobindo
(*at Pondicherry*, 1919-1920)

1921-1926

Sarala Devi Chowdhurani came to Pondicherry and met Sri Aurobindo.

Colonel Joshua Wedgewood, a member of Parliament, met Sri Aurobindo.

The daily routine now was as follows :

7 a.m. Tea, three slices of toast bread with butter.

Before 11-30 a.m. all the inmates had to finish their bath, Sri Aurobindo took his bath last.

11-30 a.m. to 12-30 p.m. Lunch.

3-30 Afternoon Tea. To be prepared by the inmates of the house by turns.

9-30 p.m. Dinner at night : generally consisting of a fish curry, rice, curd and bread.

Vattel, a cook employed in Sri Aurobindo's house, was dismissed. He threatened that he would make the place too hot for for Sri Aurobindo to stay. He enlisted the help of a mahomedan fakir and tried black magic by using a boy servant who was serving in his house, as a medium. After some time stones began to fall in 41, Rue François Martin. This was in the winter of 1921. The incident is described by Sri Aurobindo himself. (See Appendix : "Dilip's interview").

Those who witnessed this phenomenon were : Sri Aurobindo, Upendranath Banerji, Hrishikesh Kanjilal, Bijoy Kumar Nag, Satyen, Amrita. Upendranath did not believe in the existence and even the possibility of such materialisation of the occult force and so went to the terrace with a lathi and lantern to find out the persons responsible for it while the stones went on falling without interrruption.

1921

Sarojini Ghose, Sri Aurobindo's sister, Sudhamayi Sen and Pratap Sen came to Pondicherry. Sri Aurobindo went to the station to receive them. Sri Aurobindo's "War and Self-Determination" was given to Sarojini to help her financially.

Kumud Bandhu Bagchi of Calcutta, a Sadhak came to Pondicherry. He became afterwards an advocate. A photograph of Bagchi, Amrita and Sri Aurobindo was taken.

Kodanda Ram Aiyya, a Sadhak from Andhra and Ramchandran, a Tamil Sadhak stayed in Pondicherry on their own keeping in touch with Sri Aurobindo.

The monthly magazine "Arya" discontinued publication, after giving the first four issues in two numbers.

In this year began "Collective" meditation. At four in the evening the inmates of the house practised meditation with Sri Aurobindo in the verandah of 41, Rue François Martin.

Arunchandra Dutt from Chandernagore came and stayed in 41, Rue François Martin for some months.

Mrinalini Chattopadhyaya, Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya, Rameshwar De came to Pondicherry and met Sri Aurobindo.

1922

January 1st this year the Mother took charge of the entire management of the house.

The Sangha at Chandernagore severed connection.

Narandas Sangani, a visitor from Bhavnagar, came to Pondicherry and wanted to see Sri Aurobindo. He brought some fruits as offering and asked for an appointment. Sri Aurobindo could not find time to see him. He became very angry. He began mixing with the secret police agents and tried to spread rumours and falsehoods against Sri Aurobindo and the inmates of the house. He even tried threats but ultimately failed and went away.

He went to Raman Maharshi at Tiruannamalai and questioned him about meat eating particularly with reference to Sri Aurobindo. Generally the Maharshi hardly replied to questions put by casual visitors. But to Narandas he said, "It is only a question of practice, and custom".

In July 1922 Sri Aurobindo in a letter sent through Amrita stated that he would not remain in Pondicherry more than two years. In those days this idea of going back to India—from French India—was current in the house.

In Sep. 1922 the residence was changed from 41, Rue François Martin to No. 9, Rue de la Marine. After that No. 41, Rue François Martin was called the "Guest House".

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother occupied the new house from Sept. 1922 to Feb. 8th 1928.

November 18, 1922 a letter to C. R. Das.

1923

The difference between Chandernagore and Sri Aurobindo widened. The question was : whether Supermind can be attained by following the movement of Nature. Moti Babu sent a letter with Arun Chandra Dutt requesting Sri Aurobindo for an interview. No tangible result of it came out.

April. Letter to Barin at Bhavanipore—centre of Sadhana at Calcutta, about the Sadhana of the members and the management of the Centre.

Suggestions for collecting funds.

Letter to Rajani Kanta Palit about the illness of his child, Rothin. Suggestion to Palit about his own Sadhana.

April 9. Talk—in the evening—about the political situation and constructive programme for village uplift.

April 11. Talk with K. Rajangam about Sadhana. He is an inmate of the house.

April 13. Talk about Vishnu Bhasker Lele and his gurubhai—co-disciple—Narayan Swami and Duttatraya Yoga.

Description of his own experience at Baroda when he met Lele.

April 14. Suggestions about Sadhana; a letter from Natwarlal Bharatia of Surat; conversation about suggestion, intuition and inspiration—difference in the three functions. A letter to Barin.

April 17. W. W. Pearson came from Shantiniketan. Talk about Shantiniketan.

April 19. Talk on Non-violence and Hindu Muslim unity.

April 20. Talk with the agents of the Pravartak publishing House, Chandernagore and the Aryan publishing House, Calcutta about publication of books.

April 21. Suggestions about sadhana.

April 22. Talk on Pravartak and Moti Babu.

April 26. A letter from Bepin Chandra Pal to Sri Aurobindo. Subject : Poetry.

April 27. Lele's letter to Natwarlal Bharatia of Surat. Sri Aurobindo's remarks and suggestions.

April 28. Talk on Ramkrishna Mission in America; spirituality and the external world; suggestions about sadhana.

April 30. Letter from Arunchala Mission of Bengal.

May 2. Talk on Pravartak Sangha of Chandernagore.

May 8. Talk on the Bardoli programme.

May 13. Letter to Moti Babu; talk on the subject matter; letter from Barin; an article by Upen Banerjee in the "Bijoli".

May 15. Talk on Communism in Russia.

May 16. Nevinson's impression about Sri Aurobindo; letter of Robert Bridges to Sri Aurobindo, requesting him to recommend the Reforms for acceptance. Talk on Despande's "Sadhakashram" at Andheri.

May 18. G. V. Subba Rao's article in the "Swaraj" of Madras comparing Mahatmaji and Sri Aurobindo.

May 20. Talk on Theosophy; Barin's letter—meeting of Barin and Moti Babu.

May 26. Suggestions for sadhana; photographs of intending sadhaks,—reading of the photographs, conditions for the descent of Supermind; samata and hold on life; relation between Guru and disciple. Grace of Guru.

Question: Is there anything like grace? i.e. What is called "*ahaitukī kṛpā*?" Can the personal side of the Guru dispense divine grace?

Sri Aurobindo: It depends upon who is the Guru. You don't mean to say that the personal side of the Guru decides what is to be given to the disciple voluntarily and independently of the Divine. Even when it appears to take that form it is something else that decides the thing.

All your idea about *Patita Pāvana* and *adhama-uddhār* means only this. "That however bad or seemingly wicked the external life may be yet the man can be saved if he has something in him which can receive the truth".

May 30. A dream experience of Sri Aurobindo: a description given in the evening: "Some dreams have got meaning down to their very details.

There was a scientist and a magician and they both wanted to

rescue a girl from alien enemies. The magician was the psychic and mental man who knows the truth but does not know the concretisation of the same. He has the grasp of the spirit but not of the process and details.

The scientist tried and the magician tried to save the girl. The magician failed. Then the scientist tried. He found himself baffled by the opponents as they (the Dasyus—vital powers) were not struck down by the blows of the sword or anything. They were all going to a King's capital. Then they fled and the girl was taken away. The scientist was a geologist who had made the discovery that the strata of the earth must be measured from the top and not from the bottom.

When the enemies fled they left their things behind and did not like to go to the capital wounded.

The scientist then found among things left a big book on geology —half as big as the room!—and he found the girl just behind the cover and the pages !

Thus the secret of earth, the physical nature, was symbolically given".

May 1923

June 1. Talk about beings on the vital plane; about the visit of the Prince of Wales to India; Britain's offer to the Congress—Sri Aurobindo's remarks.

June 5. Visit of C.R.Das—interview with Sri Aurobindo, 3-30 p.m. The Pravartak Sangha, Moti Babu, present political situation, Das' own spiritual life—these were the main topics discussed. There was talk about the "Swarajya party" also. Sri Aurobindo was ready to help him in his spiritual life, if he could leave politics and devote himself exclusively to it. Das could not take up that course. He was advised to continue his political work and attend simultaneously to his spiritual life as much as he could. He gave his support to the formation of "Swarajya Party".

June 10. Translation of Vedic Riks : Evening talk on the Vedas. He said : "I wrote 'The Secret of the Veda' in great hurry, and it requires a revision. If I had not written it under the pressure of 'Arya', I would not have written it at all. I had to work much through my intuition and that was not easy to make work.

June 15. Talk on the Maruts—the Storm-Gods—of the Veda and on Agni, the divine Flame. He read some Riks.

June 13. Talk on Duttatrya—Yoga and about Mahatma Gandhi.

June 18&19. Talk on Jain philosophy and physical Sciences.

June 20. Sri Aurobindo related his own spiritual experiences and spoke about Mother's experiences.

June 23. Talk on Non-violence and self-purification.

June 26. Talk on Hindu-Muslim Unity; Non-violence; meat diet and vegetarian diet.

August 1. Arunchandra Dutt met Sri Aurobindo.

August 2. Letter from Moti Babu; it was read out, there was talk about it.

August 5. On Samata.

August 7. Ramji Hansraj of Amreli came and met Sri Aurobindo: Talk about True and False intuition.

August 8. Velji Thakersi Shah of Bidada, Cutch. He met Sri Aurobindo; Talk on Non-violence and Ireland.

August 9. Gokuldas of Cutch came and met Sri Aurobindo, personal aim in works and spiritual action.

August 14. Motilal Mehta of Bombay met Sri Aurobindo.

August 15. Barada Charan, a Yogi of Bengal, had an experience about Sri Aurobindo; talk about celebrating the 15th August. The food was as usual; difficulty of descent into the physical: evening talk on the Supermind.

August 15th, 1924

Who can describe this day? Speaking without adding colours of imagination, poetic similies, and loaded epithets one can say "It was the 15th August". That would be the true description of the day. No other day can come up to it in the depth and intensity of spiritual action, the ascending movement of the flood of emotions, and the way in which each individual here was bathing in the atmosphere.

It is the supreme sign of the Master to assume all possible relations with his disciples, make them real, and concrete. Each disciple knows him as his own, and each the Mother accepts as his,

Each believes the Master loves him most and it is true that he loves each the most. This feeling is not illusion or delusive self-hypnotism, but is quite real. The spontaneous dynamic law of the Supreme Truth which he embodies, is love—divine Love.

In all, the delight of Surrender is overflowing—the bliss of surrender, its sparkle pervades all. All is given up, everything is surrendered. How free you feel ! How light and unburdened you feel ! There is someone to take up the whole of your burden—there is a power of Supreme Love. Him you can trust implicitly. You need only to give up your little self, the rest is his work, you have no worry, no anxiety ! No effort—only, the way of loving surrender ! How easy !

Every face is beaming with the joy of surrender, every one is happy to overflowing. And yet there is no external reason, no outer materials for this intense joy. From where is flowing this unlimited Delight ? They say the Master was not in such a happy mood these two or three years.

From early morning the Ashram is humming with various activities : decoration, flowers, garlands, food, bath, etc. All are eager to go to the Master, for his Darshan. As the time passes there is a tide in the flood of rising emotion. It is "Darshan"—we see him everyday, but to-day it is "Darshan" ! Today each sees him individually, one after another. In the midst of these multiple activities the consciousness gets concentrated. To-day is "Darshan" —not of human being but of some Supreme Divinity. To-day is the rare chance of seeing the Divine.

There he sits—in the royal chair in the verandah—royal and majestic. In the very posture there is divine self-confidence. In the heart of the Supreme Master, the great Yogin—a sea of emotion is heaving—is it a flood that mounts or a flood that is coming down on humanity ? Those alone who have experienced it can know something of its divinity. Those who have bathed in it once can never come out of that ocean. He sits there—with pink and white lotus garlands. It is the small flower-token of the offering by the disciples. Hearts throb, prayers, requests, emotions pour forth—and a flood of blessings pours down carrying all of them away in their speed. Lack of faith, doubts get assurance. All human needs the Divine fulfils and after fulfilling his grace overflows.

Love and grace flow on undiminished. The look ! enrapturing and captivating eyes ! Who can ever forget ?—pouring love and grace and ineffable divinity. If some transcendent Divinity is not here where else can it be ?

He is usually an embodiment of knowledge. But to-day he is different. He is all love. Here is the Great Poet and the Supreme Lover incarnate ! It is an inquiring, loving and blessing in a glance ! man does wonders with his eyes and looks but to do so much, divinity is indispensable.

The question is what to ask ? Love or blessings ! or, should one pray for love and blessings both and in addition for the acceptance of unworthy persons like us. Standing on the brink of Eternity when the soul saw his dreamy and loving eyes, then was it captured for ever. The inexplicable mystery of divine love was here a tangible experience ! who can explain a fact ? A fact is a fact and an experience an experience. There is no explanation possible.

"What should I give him ?" is the question of the mind. "What should I ask ?" is the question of the heart. Both refuse to answer and both are unanswered. The mind feels the insignificance of its offering, and remains mute. The heart is ashamed of its beggar's attitude, or even feels its pride wounded. How to solve this pleasant embarrassment ? The beggar heart carries the day. There is even a kind of curiosity to find out how one is accepted, what happens to oneself.

But all this was before Darshan. As one actually stands in front all curiosity, all pride, all thoughts, all questions, all resolutions are swept away in some terrific divine Niagara. Thou embodiment of love Supreme ! what a transparency ! In the heart of Supreme Master also, an ocean of emotion is heaving. The heart melts and falls at his feet without knowing, it surrenders itself ! where is here a place of speech ! There is only one speech—the language of the body and its flexion, that of the prostration of the body in the act of surrender, throbbing of the heart and that of the flow of tears from the eyes ! What a peace pregnant with divinity ! What a beauty of this experience!

Everyone is trying to maintain Samata—equality. Everyone is quiet and is trying hard to remain calm. But to-day all the barriers of humanity are swept away by the flood of divine Love. The soul

has its Samata—its equality—but the whole nature is in agitation as unknown waters have rushed into it. Knowledge is laid on the shelf—it is all a flood of love. To-day the soul has received the certitude of the Divine's victory as it had never done before.

In the dining room are gathered all bathing and bathed in delight. Everyone is happy—supremely happy—in perfect ecstasy. To-day there is an empire of Delight! O Artist! what a marvellous art ! So much of delight—for everyone of them !—delight that fills each and overflows.

At four o'clock all gather at the usual place of sitting—the verandah. All sit there full of hopes in silence; one or two whisper to each other. The mind of the company is silently repeating "when will he come. Let him come". It is four fifteen; the old familiar and yet new "tick" behind the door ! Slowly a door opens : The Master steps out first, behind him the Mother in a white creamy sari with broad red border. He sat in his usual broad Japanese chair. The Mother sat on the right side on a small stool. For a short time about five minutes there was complete silence !

Then he glanced at each one separately. The minutes were melting into the silence. There is again a wave of emotion in all, all bathe again into an ocean of some divine emotion. How wonderful if the whole Eternity would flow in this experience. Time, poor Time and its flow is blamed by men. But where is the fault in the flow of time ? If so much Love and such Divine Delight can have its play let poor Time flow and have its Eternity ! And let the world become Divine ! Another powerful aspiration that came to the surface was :

"Expression is not needed—let the whole of eternity flow away in this silence!"

When the Master came for the evening sitting emanating joy he asked with a smile, "What do you want to-day ?—Silence or speech ?" As if he had come to confer whatever boon we ask. For a time it was silence that reigned. Then from that silence a flow appeared to start. The hearts of the disciples were tip-toe with expectation, for to-day they were hearing not human speech but words from the Divine. To hear the Lord speak with human ears ! What a fulfilment !"

Aug. 20. Barin arrived from Calcutta; Talk about Bhawanipur-Centre, "Bijoli" paper, and about collecting money.

Sep. 12. Talk—Islamic Culture.

Sep. 25. Telegram from C. R. Das asking for a message for the "Forward"; Sri Aurobindo's non-compliance letter giving reasons : 1. He has kept silence over public questions and did not want to make an exception as it would begin a new line, 2. Other papers might request, 3. There would be some disturbance in the silent help he was giving to the Swarajya Party.

Sep. 28. True attitude in Sadhana.

Oct. 19. Manilal, a young man from near Patna, came without permission; long talk about Sri Aurobindo's refusal to see him.

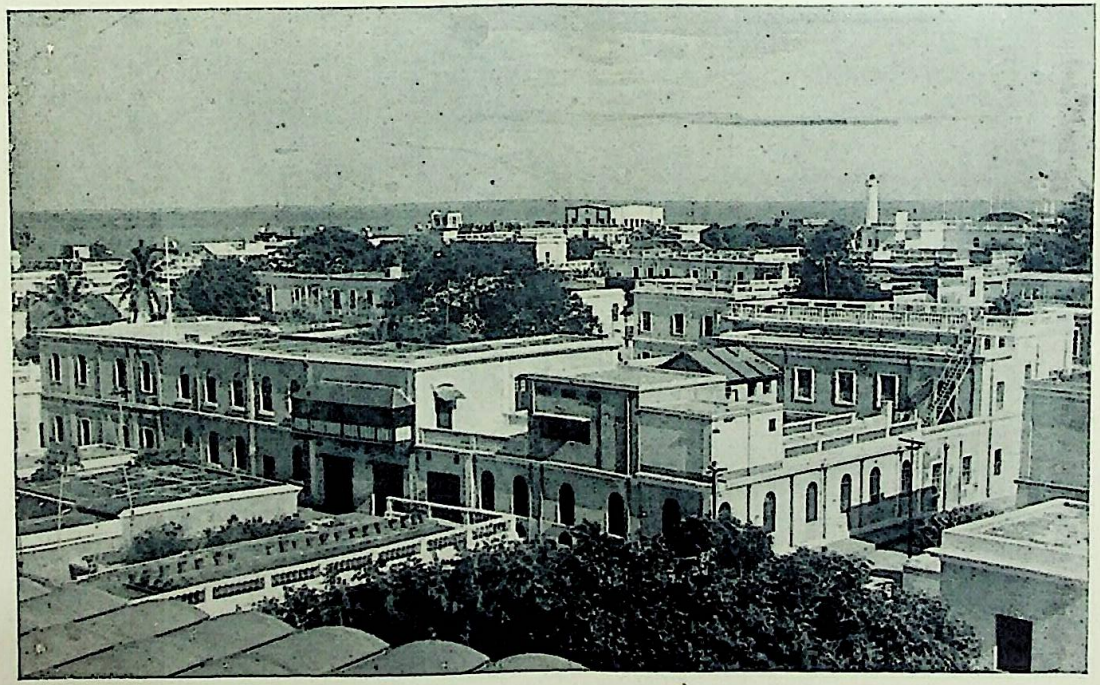
An interview with Sri Aurobindo : (G. V. Subbarao's)

(*By Brahmasree G. V. Subbarao*)

It was in October, 1923, that I first saw Sri Aurobindo in his Ashram, at Pondicherry. He was seated on a small cushioned chair, in a rather narrow verandah on the first floor of his house in which he lived for over forty years. There were about a dozen chairs in the room and a small table in front, with papers, flowers and a few books on. There was a small time-piece to indicate the progress of time, because everything here must be done according to precision and order. Sri Aurobindo was dazzling bright in colour—it was said that, in his earlier years, he was more dark than brown and had a long, rather thin beard which was well-dressed with streaks of white strewn here and there. The figure was slender and not much taller than Gandhiji's but a bit more fleshy. The eyes were big and elongated to a point and their looks were keen and piercing like shells. He was dressed in fine cotton—not khaddar evidently. He had only two clothes on, one a dhoti and the other an upper cloth worn in the traditional fashion of an *upaveetam*, i.e., right arm and shoulder exposed. The lower part of the legs was slender feminine and the feet were hidden in two small slippers.

The Interview

His voice was low, but quite audible, quick and musical to a point. He was fast in his flow, clear like a crystal and analytical



Sri Aurobindo Ashram
(Main Buildings: a bird's eye-view)

to a degree. In a fifteen minute talk, he gave me his philosophy in a nutshell. He was simple and courteous, outspoken and free in his interrogations. It seemed as though he could know a man by a sweep of his eyes, and read men's minds from a survey of their photographs. He appeared as one highly cognizant of the value of time; and at the end of the appointed fifteen minutes, he stood up looking at the clock, as if intimating me to retire. He was kind throughout, as to a child, but I could discern enough in his demeanour to conclude that he could be stern and imperious when required. To his disciples, he was loving like a Guru, but demands absolute surrender before one can be admitted to his heart's domain.

Yoga Sadhana

Sri Aurobindo had long been absorbed in a *Sadhana* for *Yoga Siddhi*, which, he believed, is destined to form a new order of life hereafter in the world. He had always seen it, though less clearly and dynamically at first, that a higher spiritual power is necessary to solve the moral, material, social and even political problems of the world. Just as Gandhiji believed in an inner, moral power or soul-force as essential for the redemption of the world, similarly, Sri Aurobindo believed that a higher spiritual power is absolutely necessary and must be brought down on earth to help the regeneration of this world.

His Yoga

This position Sri Aurobindo realised as early as 1907-1908; but necessarily, his realisation was yet vague and incomplete; the nature, conditions and circumstances of that higher power had to be explored; and the basis, knowledge, and methods to bring it down on to this earth had to be determined. For this purpose, a complete withdrawal from all external activity was necessary, at least for a time.

Aurobindo's letters dealing with Yoga—specially his instructions to his disciples at this early period—reveal him as the master-doctor, diagnosing the nature and conditions of the divine disease in men and things in an instant, or even through photographs.

This man, he says of one, is a born Yogi. In another case, he says : This man possesses a too keen psychic sensitiveness; as such, he ought not to go on with psychic experiments at once. In a case of psychic disorder, he wrote to his brother, Barindra : "You are inexperienced. You do not know how to deal with him. He needs an absolutely quiet and careful treatment. I am too far off here; but be writing often." When once there was a delay in communication, he fell upon his brother like an avalanche and wrote : "This sort of evading instructions won't do with me. In my supramental state, everything must be done in order and precision." The great care with which he was attending on the distant invalid was quite remarkable. On one occasion, he was recommending an ordinary medical treatment, on another a change of place or cessation of psychic exercises etc. Now he was writing letters, now sending telegrams, now angry with his brother, now suggesting a change of treatment—but ever anxious about the distant invalid, as if he were a very near relative. He sent a telegram to one place; but not being sure that it would reach the addressee properly, he was not satisfied till he sent another to a second address, to make himself sure of its reaching. Speaking about some visions, he says that these things are of common occurrence. "Mira had them a hundred times." This Mira seems to be an extraordinary lady; and even in 1923, she was said to be the best of his disciples and was consulted by Aurobindo on many affairs, including Yoga. No wonder, therefore, that she has been for a long time the acknowledged Mother of the Ashram.

Unique Yoga

A word now about his Yoga which is claimed as unique in the world. It is said that it has been never practised before. It is different from the ordinary yogas of Bhakti, Jnana and Karma. It goes beyond the mind to what he calls the 'Supermind' and the forces of the 'Supermind', according to him, must be brought down to transform the mind, life and body of man—our familiar Manomaya, Pranamaya and Annamaya Kosas. It is based not on an ascetic renunciation of life and its good things on this earth, but on its acceptance and complete transformation into the divine. It is a

difficult process, and accepts nothing but complete self-surrender, *ātma samarpana*. The Supermind, which I am tempted to translate as the *Brahman*, has to be brought down, and the mind, prana and body have to be gradually thrown open to receive it. For doing this, it needs great strength for the *ādhāra* to support its mighty *Shakti*. There must be complete faith and infinite strength.

Sri Aurobindo's life has been a unique and glorious one. It is unrivalled also. His literary and intellectual output alone reaches the highest Himalayan peaks of the world. His retirement, in bliss and solitude, for over forty years in one and the same place outbeats the record of any *Muni*, here or elsewhere. And the peace, wisdom, serenity and loyal and devoted following acquired in the Ashram are a new wonder in the world.

What is the future of such a glorious mission and achievement going to be ? It is a plausible question, but hardly possible to speculate upon.

One thing, however, it may be safely said. The future of the Aurobindonian Mission will depend largely, if not solely, upon the wise, devoted and persistent efforts of the Ashramites. And, as in the case of the Ramakrishna Mission, one Vivekananda among the large group of his devoted disciples might help to complete the task of "transforming the earth."

(From a lecture delivered by the author before the Eswara Library, *Kakinada*.)

(Sunday Times, May 6, 1951)
(Copy) G.V.Subba Rau

Nov. 6. Letter to Ramlal Surati, Bombay.

Nov. 8. Meditation stopped on account of inflammation of the Mother's knee.

Nov. 22. Jivanlal, aluminium merchant, came to see Sri Aurobindo.

Nov. 23. Hints about Sadhana to a disciple : Talk about the mental, vital and physical consciousness.

Dec. 20. Reply to Ketkar's letter.

Dec. 23. Interview of R.B.Athavale : Suggestions about Sadhana, about humanity and also Maya Vada; conditions for this Yoga.

Dec. 26. Letter from Natwarlal Bharatia about Lele; facts about Bombay incident.

Dec. 27. Suggestions to Athavale about Sadhana, how to take spiritual help.

The number of disciples this year was 11 to 15.

1924

January 1. Raghunath P. Thaker of Virpur near Rajkot saw Sri Aurobindo. He stayed a few days.

January 3. Amritlal Seth, Editor of Saurashtra, met Sri Aurobindo; he questioned about his own difficulties—the remedy suggested was mental self-control and strengthening of will-power.

January 5. Raghunath Thaker's idea that Siddhi can be had by Trataka—fixed gaze on a point without winking—Sri Aurobindo said :—"It can give you clarity of vision, and help you to open your consciousness to the sight of subtle levels of consciousness. I think there is no more utility of Trataka than that."

January 6. Some Congress men from Cocanada Session came to Pondicherry. There was a row with the French Police while registering their names. There were people in the group known to the inmates of the Ashram. When the matter became too hot and there was a chance of the Ashram being involved in the trouble, he said : "This is an effort of the outside forces to disturb the atmosphere of peace which I have established here with great difficulty".

January 22. The group-meditation that was going on stopped from to-day. When he was asked about the group-meditation he said: "It always requires an individual who can create the necessary spiritual atmosphere. That atmosphere is due to his presence, it cannot be created by effort".

The evening sitting also stopped from to-day.

Many Sadhaks were disturbed because both the collective activities—meditation and evening-sittings were discontinued. Tuesday and Saturday were set apart to help such disciples in their meditations. Others were given Thursday and Saturday morning for personal interview in the morning. Monday, Wednesday and Friday were fixed for the others.

One of the reasons then known for stopping collective meditation was that "it obliges Sri Aurobindo to descend lower in the consciousness". It was believed that it would be better if he completed his perfection in the physical consciousness in which case all the Sadhaks stood to gain. Afterwards, i.e., after 24th Nov. 1926,—Sri Aurobindo decided to entrust the work of helping all to the Mother.

January 24. Interview of Dilip Kumar Roy with Sri Aurobindo.

January 30. Evening sitting was resumed.

January 31. Letter from Kirparam of Agra, mention of Radhaswami Sampradaye, description of his experiences, request for guidance.

Letter to Velji Thakersi of Bidada, Cutch.

February beginning. Surajmal Lallubhai Zaveri and Dhurandhar, a Sadhaka from Bombay met Sri Aurobindo; talked about their spiritual efforts.

Mahatma Gandhi was released from Jail. He made a public statement after his release : Sri Aurobindo said : "It is a historic statement".

February 8. Letter to Kesarlal Dixit granting permission to come.

February 9. Talk about Non-violence.

February 15. Haribhai Zhaverbhai Amin of Broach came to Pondicherry. Met Sri Aurobindo on the 16th, 17th and 18th.

In the evening talk on Jacob Boehme's "Suprasensual Life".

February 22. Reforms granted to India by Ramsay Macdonald Cabinet : discussion about it in the evening.

February 26. Talk about Supramental perfection. To a Sadhak he gave hints about taste; he also explained to him if he wanted to read a book he could certainly do so but not because he was unable to control his mind. "That is real freedom in action. Yoga means mastery over the lower nature and establishing the action of the Higher Nature in its place. One has to offer his free self to the Divine. Afterwards, the Divine will choose the action in you".

March 7. Talk on Hindu-Muslim Unity and Khilafat; discussion about Tagore's poetry and Harin's. Letter of Mahatma Gandhi to Mahomed Ali—discussion on it,

March 8. Letter of Kesarlal Dixit about coming to the Ashram; Letter from Rojoni Kant Palit asking for suggestions about his wife's illness.

March 9. Mahatma Gandhi's ideas on Art—a talk upon his ideas.

March 12. Sir Harisingh Gaur gave vote in the Delhi Assembly against the Nationalist Party ! He was one who came to Cambridge after Sri Aurobindo had joined King's College. During the evening talk he recounted a reminiscence : "He was one of the students with me in England; I heard him in the Indian Majlis and in the College Union. I wonder if he has had something serious in him but he was clever and spoke well. Once during his speech he said, "The Egyptians rose up like a man" referring to their national spirit. This was repeated two or three times. So some one from the audience asked : "But how many times did they sit down ?"

March 26. The aim of Supramental Yoga and its method; talk on incarnation—Avatar. These talks throw light on the aim and the present state of Sadhana of Supramental Yoga: "This Yoga was not practised before", he said, "all the efforts were like preparatory movements. Besides, if some one had ever attempted it, the continuity is not maintained. It has been lost in the lapse of Time".

Question : Could it be that the Supermind might have descended in the past at some time and it might have again retired to its own higher plane afterwards ?

Sri Aurobindo : "If an Avatar—incarnation came, it was a promise. The Truth was not made a fact in Matter. I can say this, that it may have been tried but it was never made a dynamic factor in the world. The difficulty in bringing down the Truth is not so much in the upper physical layers but in gross Matter, —the most material plane. The Earth-law has to be changed and an atmosphere is to be created. The question is not merely to have knowledge, power, etc. but to bring it down.

People have very simple ideas about these things—but it is not so simple as it is thought. It is a very complex movement. There is the Truth above, when you go on increasing in knowledge and power etc., you go on getting above, higher and higher but the thing does not come down at once. It comes down when the

whole is ready. If once it could be made the law of the Earth-plane, then it would endure. It is difficult to make it flow down so long as there is mixed movement, for, then, it is difficult for it to descend.

Question : Do you believe that this work will be done this time ?

Sri Aurobindo : "I know that it can be done; but I don't want to prophesy. I cannot say "it will be done". But this I can say that "Something will be done this time". The doubt is there somewhere in the mental—some uncertainty. The whole thing is ready behind. If it were a certainty on the mental plane then the thing would have been already achieved. When there is the certainty there is no room for struggle. Till now it was not done because probably the hostile forces were very strong."

"When I don't accept Maya Vada, it is not that I have not realised the Truth, or that I don't know the "One in all" and "all in One". But I have other realisations which are equally strong and which cannot be shut out. The Maharshi (Raman) is right and everybody else is right."

29-12-1938

"The realisation of Self is not all. There are many things beyond that. The divine guide within urged me to proceed, adding experience after experience, reaching higher and higher, stopping at none as final, till I arrived at the glimpse of the Supermind."

29-12-1938

Once about doubt he said :

"Intellectual doubt ? But who of us had not had it ? In my own case, it followed me for years together and only for the last two years that the last shadow of doubt about the Yoga and its being practised under the present condition of human nature and practicality, disappeared."

Question : What happens when the human consciousness is replaced by the divine ?

Answer : One feels perpetual calm, perpetual strength, is aware of Infinity, lives in eternity. Everything becomes manifestation of Brahman. For instance, as I look round the room I see

everything as the Brahman—it is not thinking, it is a concrete experience, even the wall, the book is Brahman. I see you not as X but as a divine being in the Divine. It is a wonderful experience."

1-1-1939

1924

April 4. Talk on the Supramental Yoga.

April 5. Talk on Bahaism; descent of the Supermind in the physical, powers of disembodied spirits.

April 9. Talk. Mahatma Gandhi and Non-violence.

April 14. Haribhai Amin of Broach accompanied by an Englishman Mr. Wainscott came and met Sri Aurobindo.

April 20. On the senses; One Mr. Valiant, a French Citizen—(Indian) working at Karaikal met Sri Aurobindo.

April 24. Talk on the book "Eyeless Sight" by Joule Romain.

May 8. On Gandhism; Talk on Deva and Asura.

May 20. French Elections are approaching. Mon. Valiant met Sri Aurobindo to take his guidance.

Talk on Non-violence and "Sadhana Chatushtaya".

June 7. Resolution of the Congress about compulsory spinning —talk on the resolution.

June 12. About publishing "Future Poetry";—Maud Sharma, i.e., Mrs. Thakur Dutt sent her poems to Sri Aurobindo. Mr. Thakur Dutt, an Indian settled in America sent Rs. 1,000/- as a token of his regard. Talk on Harin Chattopadhyaya's poetry; G. V. Subba Rao's letter to Sri Aurobindo—he wrote about Devdas Gandhi's—Mahatmaji's son's—visit to Pondicherry.

June 17. Talk on Passive Resistance;

Letter from Suren, a Sadhaka from Chittagong—asking to come to Pondicherry after selling all his lands.

June 19. Talk on difference between Satyagraha and Passive Resistance.

June 22. About the success of Khadi; Talk on Art.

July 2. Talk on Daridra-Narayan and Charka.

July 4. A letter of Mahatma : "Defeated and humbled". Talk on it.

July 6. The evening sittings with Sri Aurobindo began to become late.

July 8. "Is poetry an ideal of Indian Culture ?" Talk on it.

July 10. Some philosophical points discussed; talk on Nirvikalpa samadhi; a letter from Tarak Nath Das.—a reply sent to him explaining his experiences.

A reminiscence of his jail life : "I wanted to get rid of cruelty and violence etc. following the conventional methods of Yoga. The result was that all the conventional thoughts and Sanskars—impressions—were completely uprooted. For eight or ten days all kinds of cruel and violent things went on happening outside and rising within. When the mind stopped reacting to them then they all ceased".

July : 28 : Kapali Shashtri met Sri Aurobindo ; talk about transformation of nature, and necessity of bringing down the divine consciousness into the physical. Only two powers can give Supermind : 1—Sri Aurobindo or 2—the Higher Power herself. There was a remarkable change noticed by me and also by Kapali in the colour of Sri Aurobindo's skin.

August : 2 : Letter from Motilal Nehru requesting Sri Aurobindo to contribute an article to his paper published from Allahabad.

August : 3 : A telegram from Natwarlal Bharatia from Surat; a letter sent in reply.

August : 15 : Celebration of his birthday. The verandah where he used to sit was decorated with Jasmine garlands. Lotuses were brought from a long distance. At 4.30 p.m. he spoke for a short time ; 6.30 p.m. there was evening sitting as usual. Questions about his life-work were asked. The number of Sadhakas 20-22.

About celebrating the 15th of August, when asked, he said :—"What is the signficance of the 15th ? I want to make it as ordinary as any other day. What has it to do with the stomach ? It has an inner significance, and if there was a method of celebrating it in a fitting manner I have no objection. I do not like any sort of vital manifestation on that day, after taking the new turn in Yoga".

6th August : 1923

"It is by living the Truth that we can celebrate it".

9th August : 1923

Speech of Sri Aurobindo on the 15th August 1924

The substance of what Sri Aurobindo spoke on the 15th August, 1924

(This year Sri Aurobindo came out at 9-15 in the morning and again at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. He spoke for about 30-35 minutes, 10-15 minutes he remained silent in the beginning.)

It has become customary to expect some speech from me on this day. I prefer to communicate through the silent consciousness, because speech addresses itself to the mind while through the silent consciousness one can reach something deeper. We are practising together a yoga which is quite different from other methods which go by the same name, in certain essentials. According to the old method you have to select the intellect, the emotion or the will or to differentiate between Purusha and Prakriti, the conscious soul and nature. By that we arrive at an Infinite of knowledge, an all-loving and all-Beautiful Supreme or an Infinite Impersonal Will, or the Silent Brahman beyond our mind—(intellect), emotional Being or, Will or our individual Purusha.

Our yoga does not aim at an Impersonal Infinite of Knowledge, Will or Ananda but at the realization of a Supreme Being, an Infinite knowledge which is beyond the limited infinity of the human knowledge, an Infinite power which is the source of our personal will and an ananda which cannot be seized by surface movement of emotions.

I have said that the Supreme Being that we want to realize is not impersonal Infinite but a Divine Personality; and in order to realize Him we have to grow conscious of our own true personality. You must know your own inner being. This Personality is not the inner mental, the inner vital and the inner physical being and its consciousness as is many times wrongly described, but it is your true Being which is in direct communication with the Highest. Man grows by gradual growth in nature and each has to realize his own Divine Person which is in the Supermind. Each one with the Divine in essence but in nature each is a partial manifestation of the Supreme Being.

This being the aim of our yoga we want to return upon life and transform it. The old yogas failed to transform life because they did not go beyond mind. They used to catch at mental experiences but when they came to apply them to life they reduced

to mental formula. For example, the mental experience of the Infinite or the application of the principle of universal Love.

We have therefore, to grow conscious on all the planes of our being, and to bring down the higher light, power and ananda to govern even the most external details of life. We must detach ourselves and observe all that is going on in the nature, not even the smallest movement, the most external act must remain unnoticed. This process is comparatively easy in the mental and vital planes. But in the physico-vital and the physical the powers of ignorance hold their sway and reign in full force, persisting in what they believe to be eternal laws. They obstruct the passage of the higher light and hold their flag. It is there that the powers of darkness, again and again, cover the being and even when the physico-vital is opened the elements of ignorance come up from the lower levels of the physical being. This is a work of great patience. The physico-vital and the physical being do not accept the higher Law and persist. They justify their persistence and their play by intellectual and other justifications and thus try to deceive the sadhaka under various guises.

Generally, the vital Being is very impatient and wants to get things done quickly, on the physico-vital and physical planes. But this has very violent reactions and therefore the mental and the vital being, instead of seizing upon the higher light and power, should surrender themselves to the higher Power. We have not to rest satisfied with partial transformation. We have to bring down the higher Power to the physical plane and govern the most external detail of life by it. This cannot be done by mental Power. We have to call down the Higher Light, power and ananda to transform our present nature. This requires an essential utter sincerity in every part of the being, which wants only the Truth (which can see clearly all that is going on in the Being) and nothing but the Truth.

The second condition of the light coming down and governing even the smallest detail of life is that one must grow conscious of his Divine personality which is in the Supermind.

There is sometimes a tendency in the sadhaks to be satisfied with experiences. One should not rest content with mere experiences.

Another thing is that, here, as we are all of us given to the pursuit of the same truth whole time (together) we have arrived at some kind of solidarity so that we can mutually help or retard our progress.

The conditions of transformation of the being are opening ourselves to the higher light, and absolute surrender. This brings the transformation. So that, if there is the entire essential sincerity, opening to the light and surrender and a gradual growth of consciousness on all the planes you can become an ideal sadhaka of this yoga.

Once he referred to his Sadhana as follows: "When I was doing Sadhana on the mental plane things came so easily. It was a child's play. With the vital being though it was not easy, yet it was interesting. But this physical is absolutely hard. It has been left untried by the ancient Yogis, it has been neglected. Of course, it is not that no effort was done,—but the physical and the physico-vital were neglected. All the accumulated difficulty is lying there. Any attempt made to conquer them is full of drudgery and labour. It is like the trench-war and no truce. You must either fight and win or collapse.

Question: But only the body would collapse?

Sri Aurobindo: In such a case as ours, if the body collapses, the whole thing collapses. You have to do the whole thing over again. If you have other kinds of collapses, for example, the vital or the mental collapses, they are not so dangerous. But this—physical collapse means complete collapse.

If you don't mind the body then of course it is a different matter. To keep the poise in case of physical disturbance is quite easy. It is nothing. I don't care for disease, or death and such other things. They are quite natural. But I care because their acceptance means defeat of the whole effort of Yoga. These lower forces used to thwart and have always been trying to thwart all efforts at spiritual transformation of the physical being".

June 1926

He spoke about the same on another occasion: "It is when the Sadhana came down in the physical and the subconscient that things became very difficult. I myself had to struggle for two years;

for the subsconscient is absolutely inert, like stone. Though my mind was quite awake above, it could not exert any influence down below. It is a Herculean labour, for, when one enters there, it is a sort of an unexplored continent. Previous Yogis came down to the vital. If I had been made to see it before, probably, I would have been less enthusiastic about it. There is the instance of blind faith and they were quite right in doing so but if I left it there, the real work would have remained undone. And once it is conquered, it becomes easy for people who come after me, which is what is meant by realisation of one in all".

10-12-1938

October, 1924 Hirosawa, a Japanese gentleman known to the Mother came to Pondicherry.

Nov. 14. Letter from Dilip Kumar Roy to Moni—with an enclosure of a letter from Romain Rolland asking for the French file of the Arya. Dilip had broached the question of marriage in his letter.

1925

January 3. Punamchand Shah, a Sadhaka, from Patna got neurosis of the bone due to injury in young age. Need for going to Madras. Dr. Rangachari operated successfully—the cure took three months.

January 4. Knee-joint inflammation of the Mother—pain—telegram to Dr. Kanuga.

January 5. Lajpat Rai's interview with Sri Aurobindo; with Dr. Nihalchand, Krishnadas and Purushottamdas Tandon. It lasted 45 minutes—; free exchange of ideas on current politics.

January 6. Sri Aurobindo did not come for the evening sitting —due to Mother's indisposition. Dr. Kanuga's reply.

January 7. Lever improved—Sri Aurobindo came out for a short time.

January 8. Mother's indisposition—gradual improvement.

January 16. Dr. Banerjee arrived from Mirjapur for diagnosis. He saw Mother—Sri Aurobindo greatly relieved by the report. Improvement maintained.

January 17. Dr. Banerjee saw Mother again.

January 18. Talk with Ratikanta Nag about Arya Publishing House, Calcutta, and conditions for printing books.

January 21. Letter from Anil Baran Roy from Jail.

January 26. Sri Aurobindo resumed evening sittings.

January 28. Reply to Anil Baran Roy.

March 5-23. Letters from Anil Baran Roy.

May 9. Letter from Rajani Kanta Palit, Postal Superintendent, about his wife's illness.

May 11. Moni Lahiri's letter; in the evening talk he said: "I got three things from Lele:

I. Silent Brahmic consciousness with its infinite wideness —an experience which was concrete.

II. Power to speak and write without using mind.

III. The habit of putting myself under the guidance of a Power higher than mind.

May 13. Telegram from Motilal Roy asking for an interview: reply: "time not propitious, interview not possible, why not write ?"

Telegram from Birendra Kishore Roy Chowdhury of Gauripur, about his wife's illness.

May 17. A letter from Anil Baran Roy.

May 20. Letter from Motilal Roy, Chandernagore.

May 21. Letter from Birendra Kishore, Calcutta.

May 25. Mention in a letter about the atmosphere at Pondicherry: "the condition here is not very good. I am at present fighting the difficulties on the physical plane" i.e. forces of disease etc.

July 1. Bombay Chronicle asked Sri Aurobindo to write something about C.R. Das after his death: "Chitta Ranjan's death, a supreme loss; consummately endowed with political intelligence, magnetism, personality, force of will, tact of the hour, an uncommon plasticity of the mind. He was the one man after Tilak who could have led India to Swaraj".

Letter from Swarnaprabha, a sadhika, about her sadhana; letter to Barin advising him to close the Bhawanipur Centre at Calcutta.

July 11. Velji Thakersi Shah came from Cutch.

July 12. Talk on Théon, who had met Mother before she came

to India. In the evening talk he said: "What I find is that it is not necessary to have a full and rich development of the mental and vital being for the descent of the Supermind. It is enough if there is sufficient basis to start the higher working. If you have to wait for the full development of the mental and the vital being then it would require centuries; I do not think it necessary. Rather, too much development is an obstacle, sometimes. I find that what the mind attains with great effort is easily attained in the supermind with simplicity and directness. Whatever is necessary is brought down with the Supermind in its descent because the Supermind carries with it its own fullness. In my own case, I found the mental effort a great obstacle. But I had to do it, in order to get the necessary knowledge. Mind is like an infinite snake coiling round and round".

August 15. Sri Aurobindo came out at 10 o'clock. The verandah was decorated with jasmine flowers. There were 27 people including S. Duraiswamy, Kapali Shastri, Kesarlal Dixit, Chandra Shekhar Aiya, Nagaratnam.

August 23. Talk on "Joan of Arc".

August 31. Letter from P.M. Patel.

September 19. Letter from Dhiren—reply dictated.

September 21. Narmada Shanker Bhatt of Lunawada met Sri Aurobindo. Suggestion about the Japa of Gayatri; Letter from Rajani K. Palit.

September 24. Letter from Haradhan Baxi of Chandernagore —reply dictated; Bhawanipur Centre closed. Kumudbandhu Bagchi very much annoyed.

September 29. Letter from Bhupal Chandra Bose, Sri Aurobindo's father-in-law, about his son-in-law's illness.

September 29. Letter from Swarnaprabha.

September 30. Letter from Nolineshwar Bhattacharya, Calcutta.

October 3. Haradhan Baxi and Charurai Dev Sarkar came to Pondicherry; brought a letter from Motilal Rai; Durga Das Seth of Chandernagore gave Rs. 1000/-.

October 4. Letter from Swarnaprabha's husband—reply containing remarks about the relation of husband and wife from the spiritual point of view.

October 7. Letters from Nolineshwar and Mano Mohan Dhar. (both later joined the Ashram)

October 13. Rati Palit, Rojoni's brother's letter.

October 14. Letter from Pandit Nirmalchand about illness due to cancer of Jagat Singh; talk on "grace".

November 2. Talk on "Yoga and humanity".

November 11. Need of Samata—equality and common sense in Yoga Sadhana. He said about himself: "A perfect yoga requires perfect balance, that was the thing that saved me,—I mean the perfect balance. First of all I believed that nothing is impossible and at the same time I could question everything. If I had believed in everything that came I would have been like Bijoy Goswami."

November 19. The question about Sri Aurobindo's "Speeches" came up in the evening. A request was made that he should go through and revise them. He refused saying: "No. I have nothing to do with the "Speeches". They belong to the past democratic Aurobindo. They are only useful for Naren's sale".

About his biography he said: "To write my biography is impossible. The idea is quite wrong. Who could write it ? Not only so, in case of poets, philosophers and yogis it is no use attempting their biography, because they do not live in their external life. Their real life is inner life and how can anyone else know that life ?

It is different with the man of action like Napoleon or Julius Caesar, men who develop themselves through action. Even in their case it would be best if they wrote their biographies themselves".

November 22. To-day he said in the evening: "I would have to correct the "Synthesis of Yoga". Magazine is not the proper form for such works. The "Yoga of Knowledge" is too long and requires to be shortened and the "Yoga of Bhakti" is too short and summary. It requires to be added to."

He said during talk that the Synthesis may be published in the form of small books.

Dictated reply to Anil Baran Roy.

November 26. Kanailal Hazara's letter; its reply.

November 30. Letter from Sri Aurobindo's sister-in-law, Mrinalini Devi's sister, after her bereavement.

Krishnashashi, a Sadhak from Chittagong, had got unbalanced

in mind for some time. To-day he suddenly made his appearance at Pondicherry.

For three days he created great disturbance; he wanted to force his entry into the houses. At last, it was arranged to send him back.

December 1. Letters from Swarna, her mother, and Mohini.

December 4. Talk on "Gandhism".

December 5. Talk on Vaishnavism.

December 9. Talk on Sangha at Chandernagore.

December 14. Manindra Naik, a representative of Chandernagore in the Legislature at Pondicherry met Sri Aurobindo.

December 26. Philip Barbier de St. Hilaire—"Pavitra"—came to Pondicherry from Japan; letter from Swarnaprabha.

1926

January 1. Talk on Theosophy.

January 25. Talk on Theosophy.

January 26. Talk on Art, Vaishnavism.

January 28. Talk on Art. He said during the talk: "Really speaking I got my true taste (for painting) from Alipore Jail. I used to meditate and I saw various pictures with colours and then I found that the critical faculty also arose in me. I did not know the thing intellectually but I caught at the real spirit. But my natural preference is for architecture and sculpture".

January 29. Talk on Yoga and Morality.

January 30. During evening talk he said: "I used to get fever and sometimes something would come down and reject it successfully, while at other times I had to go on working at one thing again and again.

"I have seen that, at times, the strongest faith does not succeed. Again, you may have the strongest will and yet it does not get done. Not that faith is not necessary or the will not useful. But they both require something—a third element—which when it comes down brings success. Even if there is opposition yet the success comes".

February 4. There was talk about quinine: He said: "Last time I took quinine was in Alipore Jail in 1909. It had no effect. The fever was very high and in that state I somehow staggered to the

door of the cell and told the watchman to bring some water. He brought very cold—almost ice cold—water. I drank the whole quantity he had brought. Then feeling very weak I lay down in bed. In ten minutes the fever left me. After that I did not get that kind of fever".

February 24. Tirupati, a Sadhaka from Andhra, had lost his mental balance and so he was sent to Vijaynagaram. He came from there to Pondicherry without permission. He was informed by a wire not to come: "Inform Tirupati my anger; prevent coming to Pondicherry. I refuse to receive him."

One could see here that he could become hard when necessary. Whether "anger" was the ordinary emotion felt or was it a yogic reaction? Once speaking about "anger" he said about his own experience: "In my case I saw anger coming up and possessing me. It was absolutely uncontrollable when it came. I was very much surprised to see it in my nature. Anger has always been foreign to me....But by "anger" I do not mean the Rudra Bhava which I had a few times".

Question: Is Rudra Bhava something like the story of snake related by Ramakrishna where the snake was asked to raise up its hood—an appearance of anger—to keep off harmful people?

Sri Aurobindo: Not at all. It is something genuine—a violent severity against something very wrong; e.g., the Rudra Bhava of Shiva. Anger one knows by its feelings of sensations; it rises from below. While Rudra Bhava—the divine manyu—rises from the heart. I will give an instance. Once X became very violent against the Mother and was shouting and showing his fists. As I heard the shouting, a violent severity came down that was absolutely uncontrollable. I went out and said: "Who is shouting at the Mother?" "Who is shouting here?" As he heard it X became quiet".

1-1-1939

March 2. Talk on individual effort and Divine's work.

March 6. Talk on marriage of some Sadhaka at Chandernagore.

March 12. Place of personal effort in Sadhana: speaking about subtle sight he said: "I had myself a remarkable experience of the psychic sight. I was at Baroda at that time and my psychic

sight was not yet developed. I was trying to develop it by dwelling upon the after-image and also by attending to it in the internal between wakefulness and sleep.

Then I saw a round circle of light and when I began Pranayam it became very much intensified."

March 13. Talk on the psychic being.

March 31. A reminiscence of Baroda was related this evening : "When I joined the Baroda State Service as I was not accustomed to getting money I got the tendency to gather and save money. I saved some money, and then suddenly spent away the whole sum at a time". Dinendra Kumar Roy speaks of this in his "Sri Aurobindo Prasanga". It is also seen in Mr. R. N. Patker's statement in the appendix.

"In 1909 I got a yogic fancy for taking only rice, ghee and plantains which I carried out—though desire for meat was there in the vital being".

Talk about Abanindra Nath and Rabindra Nath Tagore's art.

April 7. Talk on Indian political constitutions and institutions.

April 14. To-day he spoke about one of his experiences "When I first got the Cosmic Consciousness—I call it the passive Brahman, —I did not fall into unconsciousness. I was fully conscious on the physical plane. It also did not go away, or did not last for a few moments, as Dr. Buck lays down. It lasted for months. It came upon me as soon as I could quiet the mind completely. I saw it above the mind and it was that which was reflected in the mind".

May 6. Tirupati came again to Pondicherry : a stiff letter asking him to go back was sent by Sri Aurobindo.

May 12. Talk on Dr. Gustave Jillet's book : "Ectoplasmic and Clairvoyance".

May 18. Talk on Yoga and Shakti.

May 20. Talk on Ouspensky and Dr. Buck and their books.

June 1. Conversation on vital plane and the Asuras.

June 10. Talk on the form of working of the Higher Power and about his own Sadhana. During this period—1924-1926—Sri Aurobindo used to get cooked fish ready for the cats to eat. In the evening he said : "I was once a violent non-vegetarian as C is at

present a violent vegetarian. Then I found that it was my own vital being that was demanding meat. Well, I gave it up and for years together I went on taking whatever came. Then I discovered that what people call tasteless and bad food has got its own taste".

June 11. Talk on different parts of the being and their relation to each other.

June 15. Immortality and the victory of the Supermind on the physical plane.

When the subject of fasting came up he said : "It is when I did my fast of about 23 days when I was living in Chettiar's house I very nearly solved the problem (whether it is possible to live without food). I could walk eight hours a day as usual, I continued my mental work and Sadhana also as usual, and I found that I was not in the least weak at the end of 23 days. But the flesh began to grow less and I did not find the clue to replacing the very material reduced in the body.

When I broke the fast then also I did not observe the usual rule of people who fast for long periods, of beginning with little food and so on. I began again with the same quantity as I used to take before".

"I had tried fasting once in the jail; but that was for ten days when I used to sleep also once in three nights. I lost ten pounds in weight but I felt stronger at the end of ten days than I was before I began the fast."

June 18. Talk on Astrology and prophecy.

June 25. Talk on suffering and Spirituality.

June 26. Talk on the Gods.

June 29. Difference between European and Indian politics. In July a few days in the beginning the topic was "Tirupati" the Sadhaka.

July 10. During talk he said : "Vivekananda came and gave me the knowledge of intuitive mentality. I had not the least idea about it at that time. He too had not got it when he was in body. He gave me the detailed knowledge illustrating each point. The contact lasted for about three weeks and then he withdrew."

July 11. Kaya Kalpa methods current in India.

August 6. Talk on the relation between feelings and emotions.

August 13. Talk on psychology.

August 14. Aesthetic being and psychic being—their relation.

August 16. Reported incident at Bareilly about memory of past birth—; evening talk on the subject.

August 18. Explanation of "opening" in yoga, talk on the "Arya".

August 22. Talk on the form of the Gods.

August 24. Talk on the plane of Gods.

August 26. Talk on education.

August 27. Talk on art and beauty.

August 31. Talk on science—Time and Space.

September 2. Three or four lady disciples—Sadhikas—began to go to the Mother for meditation. After a few days male disciples also were allowed to go to the Mother for meditation.

September 3. Dolatram, a pleader from the Panjab, came for Sadhana and stayed for sometime.

September. 4. "If I had stuck to my job, I would have been a principal, perhaps, written some poetry, and lived in comfort like a bourgois. All the energy I have I owe to yoga. Even the energy I put forth in politics came from yoga."

September 7. Talk on characteristics of national mentalities.

September 19. Dhiren's letter—reply sent, explaining dreams.

September 20. Talk on fitness for yoga.

September 25. A funny reminiscence of Baroda life : "When Mr. Eliot, the Maharaja's tutor, came to Baroda from England, Mr. Pavri, a Parsi officer, could not understand anything spoken by Mr. Eliot because of the strangeness of his pronunciation. So, Mr. Pavri went on saying "yes" to everything. Then Mr. Eliot put him a question to which he should have said "no". But instead he said as usual "yes". Eliot got annoyed and said : "Shall I take you for an ass ?" Pavri replied, "Yes" !"

October 12. Talk on poetry.

In the third week of October Rajani Palit came. He obtained permission to meditate with the Mother.

November 5. On the Gods and Asuras—Gods on different planes : on the Supramental plane. The subject has a bearing on the present state of sadhana.

24th November 1926

The Day of Siddhi

In order to understand the importance of this day it is necessary to go back to Sri Aurobindo's experience in the jail in 1908-1909 and link it up with the 24th of November 1926. We must also take into consideration what Sri Aurobindo wrote about his own sadhana to Barin in reply to his letter in 1920.

In that letter of April 1920 Sri Aurobindo described the stage of his yoga when he came to Pondicherry in 1910 as "Preliminary or preparatory". That is to say it was preliminary stage of the Supramental yoga. "The inner guide, the Universal Teacher, showed me my path entirely. All its essence is contained in the ten-limbs of the yoga. For the last ten years (1910-1920) the Divine has been giving me the experience of that element and developing it in me, though the work is not yet finished..."Without reaching the Supramental it is impossible to know the ultimate secret of the world. The riddle of the world cannot be solved without it".

"But its attainment is not easy. After fifteen years, I am just now rising to the lowest of the three layers of the Supermind and trying to draw up all my movements into it. But when the siddhi is complete, then there is no doubt that the Divine will give the Siddhi of the Supermind to others through me with very little effort. Then my *real work* will begin. I am not in hurry to accomplish my work. ....I do not want to jump into the field of action, like a mad man running hither and thither, with the power of his petty egoism.... This work is not mine, it is Divine's....I do not want thousands or lakhs of disciples. It would be enough if I get a hundred men free from their petty egoism and ready to work as the instruments of the Divine....

What can an imperfect man going in the midst of imperfect men achieve ?"

These questions clearly demonstrate that when Sri Aurobindo came to Pondicherry he was not groping for his path, his path was clear before him. After 1910 the charge of his yoga was taken over by the Divine and the path was revealed to him ten limbs of the

sadhana. He was all along conscious of the existence of the Supramental plane above the mind. And up to 1920 he had succeeded in ascending to the lower stratum of that consciousness and also in drawing up all the movements of nature into it.

He was, besides, not impatient for action. He did not want to act from ignorant human instruments but from a Higher Consciousness. He had confidence that if the perfection of the Supramental descent could be established then other people would be able to profit by it with much less effort.

It was when the Tapasya for this Siddhi was going on that fortunately, as if by a Divine dispensation, the Mother joined him intimately in the great Spiritual work.

From the beginning of 1926 the work of guiding some of the disciples already began to move towards the Mother. There were also women disciples—three or four in number—staying in the Ashram who used to go to the Mother for meditation. From August 1926 the number of disciples going to the Mother increased. It was as if Sri Aurobindo was slowly withdrawing himself and the Mother was spontaneously coming out and taking up the great work, both of inner sadhana and of the outer organisation of the Ashram. The meditations became more and more concentrated and intense. Sri Aurobindo's coming out for evening sitting began to become more and more late. The wonder of it was that no one felt anything unnatural in all these changes. The part of the disciples in the tremendous task of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother was insignificant, still they were the witnesses of the changes in the inner and outer atmosphere of the Ashram.

From the trend of evening talks just before and after the 15th of August it was becoming clear that the importance of a link between the highest Supermind and mind was being emphasised. He called it the Overmind. During the six years (from 1920-1926) it is also evident that he had gone much further not only in the ascent towards and also into the Higher Consciousness but also in bringing about its descent into nature. In the beginning of November the evening talks several times turned to the possibility of the descent of the Divine Consciousness and its process. From these evening conversations also, therefore, the idea of nearness of such a descent came to several disciples. There was the possibility of the descent

of the Gods. In *The Life Divine* as he finally gave it Sri Aurobindo has given a clear exposition of the Overmind plane and Consciousness. I give here some basic conceptions from it so that they might be of some help in the understanding of the descent that took place on the 24th November 1926:—

"If we regard the Powers of Reality as so many Godheads, we can say that the Overmind releases a million Godheads into action, each empowered to create its own world, each world capable of relation, communication and interplay with the others. There are in the Veda different formulations of the nature of the Gods : it is said they are all one Existence to which the sages give different names". (Ch. 28, *Life Divine* p. 429)

Further on he says :—

"Overmind thus gives to the One Existence-Consciousness-Bliss the character of a teeming of infinite possibilities which can be developed into a multitude of worlds or thrown together into one world in which the endlessly variable outcome of their play is the determinant of the creation, of its process, its course and its consequence" (Ch. 28, *Life Divine* p. 428)

In the Overmind—"each God knows all the Gods and their place in existence ;—...The Overmind is a principle of Cosmic Truth and vast and endless catholicity is its very spirit ; its energy is an all-dynamism as well as a principle of separate dynamism." (Ch.28 *Life Divine*)

A feeling that the descent of the Higher Consciousness would, or was about to take place grew into the minds of the disciples either as a result of some indicative personal experience or due to the general atmosphere. Many felt that great changes in the outer structure of the Ashram were about to come. Instead of coming to the evening sittings at half-past four, the usual time, Sri Aurobindo came at six or seven, or eight o'clock. One day the record was 2 o'clock at night ! It was evident that all the great energies were entirely taken up by the mighty task of bringing about the descent of the Higher consciousness and that he did not want to lose or

divert even a second of his time in anything else. Even though the work of maintaining an outer contact with the disciples was found useful it was becoming more and more difficult in view of the great demand upon his time for the inner work. Those who do not know about the great mission can hardly understand how concentrated and sincere was his application for attaining perfection in the task given to him by the Divine. In fact, people outside had already begun to be sceptical of any "practical" result of his great efforts. Those who had built great hopes upon his spiritual effort and were his genuine admirers had begun to be disappointed. Some even cherished the foolish belief (in their ignorance) that Sri Aurobindo had lost his way in the barren regions of the Absolute, the Para Brahman ! Or, that he was entangled somewhere in the inscrutable coils of the Infinite ! They believed that Sri Aurobindo had lost his hold on the earth, and that he had become either indifferent or deaf to the pressing and burning problems of suffering humanity. If it was not so, would he not rush to the help of humanity that is suffering so much with the saving balm of his Divine help? When was such Divine help more needed than now ?

And yet the apparent contradiction remains ; for those who were fortunate to live in his vicinity knew well enough the Higher Power that he was bringing down was not only capable of, but was actually producing practical results. His contact and identification with the Higher Power were so complete that he was able to put other people, whether near to him or far, in contact with the same. There were almost daily instances of people being saved from physical illness by his help. Far from losing his way in the Absolute he was seeing his way more and more clearly everyday and feeling more and more the inevitability of the descent as a natural crown of the movement of evolution on earth. His people knew that there was no one on earth who had a deeper sympathy and feeling for humanity than the Master. The silent and solid help that was going out from him to humanity was glimpsed by them at times. They felt that the line he wrote in "Savitri" about Ashwapathy—"His spirit's stillness helped the toiling world"—was so true in his own case. And what after all is that "practicality" of which they speak so much ? Claiming to solve problems does it not leave them either unsolved or half-solved while giving to the

actor a false sense of satisfaction and self-complacence ? In fact, the Supreme Master had such a firm grip over the earth that such illusionary satisfaction could never deceive him. For him "karmasu kaushalam"—"cleverness in actions" consisted in doing them from a higher Truth-Consciousness. He did not want to begin outer action so long as the Higher Consciousness did not descend into physical and even into the gross material consciousness. Only so can a New Life,—a life that manifests integrally the Divine, be embodied. In the fulfilment of the spiritual work that he has begun lies the ultimate solution of all human problems.

Days, months and years passed; but Sri Aurobindo did not seem at all in a hurry to begin his work. He was all along peparing the possibility for the descent of the Higher Power; because the resistance of the powers of Ignorance against any such attempt is naturally very great. In one evening talk he said that he was engaged in the tremendous task of opening up the physical cells to the Divine Light and the resistance of the Inconscient was very great. When one knows that all this herculean labour was undertaken not for himself but for humanity, for making a new departure for man in the course of his evolution—then one feels that the words he used for Savitri "The world unknowing, for the world She stood" —are so apposite in his own case. It was therefore natural that, when by the grace of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother the disciples also felt the nearness of the descent, their hearts should be full of expectant and concentrated enthusiasm.

At last the great day arrived. From the beginning of November the pressure of the Higher Power began to become unbearable. The day for which the Mother had been waiting for so many long years came on the 24th November. The sun had almost set, and everyone was occupied in his own activity—some had gone out to the seaside for a walk when Mother sent round word to all the disciples to assemble as soon as possible in the Verandah where usual meditation was held. It did not take long for the message to go round to all. By six o'clock most of the disciples arrived. It was becoming dark. In the verandah on the wall near Sri Aurobindo's door, just behind his chair, a black silk curtain with goldlace work representing three Chinese dragons was hung. The three dragons were so represented that the tail of one reached up to the

mouth of another and the three of them covered the curtain from end to end. We came to know afterwards that there is a prophecy in China that the Truth will manifest itself on earth when the three dragons (the dragon of the earth, of the mind region and of the sky) meet. To-day on the 24th of November the Truth was descending and the hanging of the curtain was significant.

There was a deep silence in the atmosphere since the disciples gathered there. Many saw an oceanic flood of Light rushing down from above. Every one present felt a kind of pressure above his head. The whole atmosphere was surcharged with some electrical energy. In that silence, in that atmosphere full of concentrated expectation and aspiration, in the electrically charged atmosphere, the usual, but to-day quite unusual, tick was heard behind the door of entrance. Expectation rose in a flood. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother could be seen from the half opened door. The Mother with the gesture of the eyes requested Sri Aurobindo to step out first. Sri Aurobindo with similar gesture suggested her to step out first. With slow dignified step the Mother came out first followed by Sri Aurobindo with his majestic gait. The small table that used to be in the front of Sri Aurobindo's chair was removed to-day. The Mother sat on a small stool on his right side.

Silence absolute, silence living,—not merely living but a silence overflowing with divinity. The meditation lasted about fortyfive minutes. After that one by one the disciples bowed to the Mother. She and Sri Aurobindo gave blessings to them. Whenever a disciple bowed to the Mother Sri Aurobindo's right hand came forward behind the Mother as if blessing him through the Mother. After the blessings, in the same silence there was a short meditation.

In the interval of silent meditation and blessings many got distinct experiences. When the whole thing was over then they felt as if they had awakened from a divine dream. Then they felt the grandeur, the poetry and the absolute beauty of the occasion. It was not as if a handful of disciples were receiving blessings from their Supreme Master and Mother in one little corner of the earth. The significance of the occassion was far greater than that. It was certain that a Higher Consciousness had descended on earth. In that great silence had burgeoned like the sprout of a Banyan tree some beginning of a great spiritual work. This great occasion

carried its significance to all in the divine dynamism of the silence, in its unearthly dignity and grandeur and in the utter beauty of its every little act. The deep impress of divinity which everyone got was for him a priceless treasure.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother went inside. Immediately Datta got inspired. In that silence she spoke: "The Lord has descended into the physical to-day".

That November 24th is given an importance equal to that of the birthdays of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is quite proper because on that day the descent of the Higher Power symbolic of the victory of their mission took place. The delight consciousness in the Overmind which Sri Krishna incarnated—as the Avatar—descended on this day into the physical rendering possible the descent of the Supermind in Matter.

Of this descent Sri Aurobindo wrote on several occasions afterwards. In October 1935 he wrote the following:

"The 24th November, 1926 was the descent of Krishna into the physical. Krishna is not the supramental Light. The descent of Krishna would mean the descent of the Overmind Godhead preparing, though not itself actually, the descent of Supermind and Ananda. Krishna is the Anandamaya; he supports the evolution through the overmind leading it towards his Ananda".

October, 1935 SRI AUROBINDO

Sri Aurobindo

(Pondicherry, April, 1950)

Part Three

ON HIMSELF

"THERE are different statuses of the divine consciousness. There are also different statuses of transformation. First is the psychic transformation, in which all is in contact with the Divine through the individual psychic consciousness. Next is the spiritual transformation in which all is merged in the Divine in the cosmic consciousness. Third is the supramental transformation in which all becomes supramentalised in the divine gnostic consciousness. It is only with the latter that there can begin the *complete* transformation of mind, life and body—in my sense of completeness.

"You are mistaken in two respects. First, the endeavour towards this achievement is not new and some Yogis have achieved it, I believe—but not in the way I want it. They achieved it as a personal siddhi maintained by Yoga-siddhi—not a dharma of the nature (physical transformation). Secondly, the supramental transformation is not the same as the spiritual-mental. It is a change of mind, life and body which the mental or overmental-spiritual cannot achieve. All whom you mention were spirituals, but in different ways. Krishna's mind, for instance, was overmentalised, Ramakrishna's intuitive, Chaitanya's spiritual-psychic, Buddha's illumined higher mental. I don't know about Bijoy Goswami—he seems to have been brilliant but rather chaotic. All that is different from the supramental. Then about the vital of the Paramahansas. It is said that their vital behaves either like a child (Ramakrishna) or like a madman or like a demon or like something inert (cf. Jadabharata). Well, there is nothing supramental in all that. So ?...One can be instrument of the Divine in any of the transformations. The question is, an instrument for what ?" (*Pages* 181-183)

April, 1935

"Everything depends on the inner condition, and the outward action is only useful as a means and a help for expressing or confirming the inner condition and making it dynamic and effective. If you do or say a thing with the psychic uppermost or with the right inner touch, it will be effective; if you do or say the same thing out of the mind or the vital or with a wrong or mixed atmosphere, it may be quite ineffective. To do the right thing in the right way in each case and at each moment one must be in the right consciousness —it can't be done by following a fixed mental rule which under some circumstances might fit in and under others might not fit in at all....

All depends therefore not on a mental rule to follow in practice, but in getting the psychic consciousness back and putting its light into this vital part and making that part turn wholly to the Mother."

11-6-1932 (*Pages* 644-645)

"It is only divine Love which can bear the burden I have to bear, that all have to bear who have sacrificed everything else to the one aim of uplifting earth out of its darkness towards the Divine." (*Page* 221)

April, 1934

"I have myself had the experience of Vaishnava Bhakti and of Nirvana in the Brahman". (*Letters, Vol. II page* 6)

"I similarly find that my yoga is true in its own field—a larger field, as I think—and for its own purpose. The purpose of the old is to get away from life to the Divine, so obviously, let us drop Karma. The purpose of the new is to reach the Divine and bring the fullness of what is gained into life—for that, Yoga by works is indispensable". (*Letters, Vol. II Page* 7)

Q : In what sense is the Mother everywhere ? Does she know all happenings in the physical plane ?

A : Including what Lloyd George had for breakfast today or what Roosevelt said to his wife about the servants ? Why should the Mother "know" in the human way all happenings in the physical plane ? Her business in her embodiment is to know the workings

of the universal forces and use them for her works; for the rest she knows what she needs to know, sometimes with her inner self, sometimes with her physical mind. All knowledge is available in her universal self, but she brings forward only what is needed to be brought forward so that the working is done. (*Page* 539)

13-8-1933

"The Mother's consciousness and mine are the same, the one Divine Consciousness in two, because that is necessary for the play. Nothing can be done without her knowledge and force, without her consciousness—if anybody really feels her consciousness, he should know that I am there behind it and if he feels me it is the same with hers." (*Page* 361)

13-11-1934

"I cannot very well answer the strictures of Russell, for the conception of the Divine as an external omnipotent power who has "created" the world and governs it like an absolute and arbitrary monarch—the Christian and Semitic conception—has never been mine; it contradicts too much my seeing and experience during thirty years of sadhana". (*Letters, Vol. II Page* 293)

"As for the question about the illness, perfection in the physical plane is indeed part of the ideal of the Yoga, but it is the last item and, so long as the fundamental change has not been made in the material consciousness to which the body belongs, one may have a certain perfection on other planes without having immunity in the body. We have not sought perfection for our own separate sake, but as part of a general change—creating a possibility of perfection for others." (*Page* 390)

August, 1936

"If you give the money to the Mother, that can't be commercial; commerce implies personal profit, and here your profit is only spiritual." (*Page* 633)

2-4-1944

"The Mother and myself deal with all according to the law of the Divine. We receive alike rich and poor, those who are high-

born or low-born according to human standards, and extend to them an equal love and protection. Their progress in sadhana is our main concern—for they have come here for that, not to satisfy their palates or their bellies, not to make ordinary vital demands or to quarrel about position or place or comforts." (*Page* 394)

11-12-1933

"You have no experience of major realisations and you conclude that such realisations are impossible. But what of the many who have had them—elsewhere and here too in the Ashram ? That has no value ? You hint to me that I have failed to get anything by works ? How do you know ? I have not written the history of my sadhana—if I had, you would have seen that if I had not made action and work one of my chief means of realisation—well, there would have been no sadhana and no realisation except that, perhaps of Nirvana." (*Page* 202)

19-12-1934

"My remarks simply meant that I regard the spiritual history of mankind and specially of India as a constant development of a divine purpose, not a book that is closed, the lines of which have to be constantly repeated. Even the Upanishads and the Gita were not final though everything may be there in seed.

"I may say that it is far from my purpose to propagate any religion new or old for humanity in the future. A way to be opened that is still blocked, not a religion to be founded is my conception of the matter." (*Pages* 194-195)

18-8-1935

"The traditions of the past are very great in their own place, in the past, but I do not see why we should merely repeat them and not go further. In the spiritual development of the consciousness upon earth the great past ought be followed by a greater future."

(Letters, Vol. II, *Page* 323)

"You appeal to the Vaishnav-Tantric traditions; to Chaitanya, Ramprasad, Ramakrishna. I know something about them and

if I did not try to repeat them, it is because I do not find in them the reconciliation I am seeking." (Letters, Vol. II, *Page* 318)

"In the beginning, before I discovered the secret of the Supermind, I myself tried to seek the reconciliation through an association of the spiritual consciousness with the vital, but my experience and all experience show that this leads to nothing definite and final, —it ends where it began, midway between the two poles of human nature. An association is not enough, a transformation is indispensable."

(Letters, Vol. II, *Page* 319)

14-1-1932

"In any case, my object is a realisation on the physical plane and I cannot consent merely to repeat Ramakrishna."

(Letters, Vol. II, *Page* 322)

"The Supramental is *not* grand, aloof, cold and austere;....It is because it is so, because it was so revealed to me and for no other reason that I have followed after it and persevered till I came into contact with it and was able to draw down some power of it and its influence. I am concerned with the earth, not with worlds beyond for their own sake; it is a terrestrial realisation that I seek and not a flight to distant summits." (Letters, Vol. II, *Page* 327)

"I have no intention of achieving the Supermind for myself only—I am not doing anything for myself, as I have no personal need of anything, neither of salvation (Moksha) nor supramentalisation. If I am seeking after supramentalisation, it is because it is a thing that has to be done for the earth-consciousness and if it is not done in myself, it cannot be done in others. My supramentalisation is only a key for opening the gates of the Supramental to the earth-consciousness; done for its own sake, it would be perfectly futile." (*Page* 216)

April, 1935

"These egoistic terms are not those in which my vital moves. It is a higher Truth I seek, whether it makes men greater or not

is not the question, but whether it will give them truth and peace and light to live in and make life something better than a struggle with ignorance and falsehood and pain and strife. Then, even if they are less great than the men of the past, my object will have been achieved. For me mental conceptions cannot be the end of all things. I know that the Supermind is a truth.

It is not for personal greatness that I am seeking to bring down the Supermind. I care nothing for greatness or littleness in the human sense. I am seeking to bring some principle of inner Truth, Light, Harmony, Peace into the earth-consciousness; I see it above and know what it is—I feel it ever gleaming down on my consciousness from above and I am seeking to make it possible for it to take up the whole being into its own native power, instead of the nature of man continuing to remain in half-light, half-darkness. I believe the descent of this Truth opening the way to a development of divine consciousness here to be the final sense of the earth evolution. If greater men than myself have not had this vision and this ideal before them, that is no reason why I should not follow my Truth-sense and Truth-vision. If human reason regards me as a fool for trying to do what Krishna did not try, I do not in the least care. There is no question of X or Y or anybody else in that. It is a question between the Divine and myself—whether it is the Divine Will or not, whether I am sent to bring that down or open the way for its descent or at least make it more possible or not. Let all men jeer at me if they will or all Hell fall upon me if it will for my presumption,—I go on till I conquer or perish. This is the spirit in which I seek the Supermind, no hunting for greatness for myself or others. (*Pages* 213-215).

10-2-1935

"The supramental Force is descending, but it has not yet taken possession of the body or of matter—there is still much resistance to that. It is supramentalised Overmind Force that has already touched, and this may at any time change into or give place to the Supramental in its own native power. (*Pages* 380-381).

14-9-1934

This section contains portions selected from "Sri Aurobindo

On Himself". The political portion is entirely reproduced to give to the reader his own ideal, purpose and method—and also appraisal of the work from his own point of view.

The other portions are, really speaking, more important because the reader will find the affirmation of his identity with Krishna, the reason why he carried an enormous correspondence for nearly eight years with his disciples, how he helps them and how he acts on the world situation. There are some other important things the discriminating reader will find in this small but important section.

The Leader of Indian Nationalism

A General Note on Sri Aurobindo's Political Life.

There were three sides to Sri Aurobindo's political ideas and activities. First, there was the action with which he started, a secret revolutionary propaganda and organisation of which the central object was the preparation of an armed insurrection. Secondly, there was a public propaganda intended to convert the whole nation to the ideal of independence which was regarded, when he entered into politics, by the vast majority of Indians as unpractical and impossible, an almost insane chimera. It was thought that the British Empire was too powerful and India too weak, effectively disarmed and impotent even to dream of the success of such an endeavour. Thirdly, there was the organisation of the people to carry on a public and united opposition and undermining of the foreign rule through an increasing non-cooperation and passive resistance.

At that time the military organisation of the great empires and their means of military action were not so overwhelming and apparently irresistible as they now are : the rifle was still the decisive weapon, air power had not yet been developed and the force of artillery was not so devastating as it afterwards became. India was disarmed, but Sri Aurobindo thought that with proper organisation and help from outside this difficulty might be overcome and in so vast a country as India and with the smallness of the

regular British armies, even a guerrilla warfare accompanied by general resistance and revolt might be effective. There was also the possibility of a general revolt in the Indian army. At the same time he had studied the temperament and characteristics of the British people and the turn of their political instincts, and he believed that although they would resist any attempt at self-liberation by the Indian people and would at the most only concede very slowly such reforms as would not weaken their imperial control; still they were not of the kind which would be ruthlessly adamantine to the end: if they found resistance and revolt becoming general and persistent they would in the end try to arrive at an accommodation to save what they could of their empire or in an extremity prefer to grant independence rather than have it forcefully wrested from their hands.

In some quarters there is the idea that Sri Aurobindo's political standpoint was entirely pacifist, that he was opposed in principle and in practice to all violence and that he denounced terrorism, insurrection, etc., as entirely forbidden by the spirit and letter of the Hindu religion. It is even suggested that he was a forerunner of the gospel of Ahimsa. This is quite incorrect. Sri Aurobindo is neither an impotent moralist nor a weak pacifist.

The rule of confining political action to passive resistance was adopted as the best policy for the National Movement at that stage and not as a part of a gospel of Non-violence or pacific idealism. Peace is a part of the highest ideal, but it must be spiritual or at the very least psychological in its basis; without a change in human nature it cannot come with any finality. If it is attempted on any other basis (moral principle or gospel of Ahimsa or any other), it will fail and even may leave things worse than before. He is in favour of an attempt to put down war by international agreement and international force, what is now contemplated in the "New Order", if that proves possible, but that would not be Ahimsa, it would be a putting down of anarchic force by legal force and even then one cannot be sure that it would be permanent. Within nations this sort of peace has been secured, but it does not prevent occasional civil wars and revolutions and political outbreaks and repressions, sometimes of a sanguinary character. The same might happen to a similar world-peace. Sri Aurobindo has

never concealed his opinion that a nation is entitled to attain its freedom by violence, if it can do so or if there is no other way; whether it should do so or not, depends on what is the best policy, not on ethical considerations. Sri Aurobindo's position and practice in this matter was the same as Tilak's and that of other Nationalist leaders who were by no means Pacifists or worshippers of Ahimsa.

For the first few years in India, Sri Aurobindo abstained from any political activity (except the writing of the articles in the *Indu Prakash*) and studied the conditions in the country so that he might be able to judge more maturely what could be done. Then he made his first move when he sent a young Bengali soldier of the Baroda army, Jatin Banerji, as his lieutenant to Bengal with a programme of preparation and action which he thought might occupy a period of 30 years before fruition could become possible. As a matter of fact it has taken 50 years for the movement of liberation to arrive at fruition and the beginning of complete success. The idea was to establish secretly or, as far as visible action could be taken, under various pretexts and covers, revolutionary propaganda and recruiting throughout Bengal. This was to be done among the youth of the country while sympathy and support and financial and other assistance were to be obtained from the older men who had advanced views or could be won over to them. Centres were to be established in every town and eventually in every village. Societies of young men were to be established with various ostensible objects, cultural, intellectual or moral and those already existing were to be won over for revolutionary use. Young men were to be trained in activities which might be helpful for ultimate military action, such as riding, physical training, athletics of various kinds, drill and organised movement. As soon as the idea was sown it attained a rapid prosperity; already existing small groups and associations of young men who had not yet the clear idea or any settled programme of revolution began to turn in this direction and a few who had already the revolutionary aim were contacted and soon developed activity on organised lines; the few rapidly became many. Meanwhile Sri Aurobindo had met a member of the Secret Society in Western India, and taken the oath of the Society and had been introduced to the Council in Bombay. His future action was not pursued under any directions by this Council,

but he took up on his own responsibility the task of generalising support for its objects in Bengal where as yet it had no membership or following. He spoke of the Society and its aim to P.Mitter and other leading men of the revolutionary group in Bengal and they took the oath of the Society and agreed to carry out its objects on the lines suggested by Sri Aurobindo. The special cover used by Mitter's group was association for lathi play which had already been popularised to some extent by Sarala Ghosal in Bengal among the young men; but other groups used other ostensible covers. Sri Aurobindo's attempt at a close organisation of the whole movement did not succeed, but the movement itself did not suffer by that, for the general idea was taken up and activity of many separate groups led to a greater and more widespread diffusion of the revolutionary drive and its action. Afterwards there came the partition of Bengal and a general outburst of revolt which favoured the rise of the extremist party and the great nationalist movement. Sri Aurobindo's activities were then turned more and more in this direction and the secret action became a secondary and subordinate element. He took advantage, however, of the Swadeshi movement to pupularise the idea of violent revolt in the future. At Barin's suggestion he agreed to the starting of a paper, *Yugantar*, which was to preach open revolt and the absolute denial of the British rule and include such items as a series of articles containing instructions for guerrilla warfare. Sri Aurobindo himself wrote some of the opening articles in the early numbers and he always exercised a general control; when a member of the sub-editorial staff, Swami Vivekananda's brother, presented himslef on his own motion to the police in a search as the editor of the paper and was prosecuted, the *Yugantar* under Sri Aurobindo's orders adopted the policy of refusing to defend itself in a British Court on the ground that it did not recognise the foreign Government and this immensely increased the prestige and influence of the paper. It had as its chief writers and directors three of the ablest younger writers in Bengal, and it at once acquired an immense influence throughout Bengal. It may be noted that the Secret Society did not include terrorism in its programme, but this element grew up in Bengal as a result of the strong repression and the reaction to it in that Province.

The public activity of Sri Aurobindo began with the writing of the articles in the *Indu Prakash.* These seven articles written at the instance of K.G.Deshpande, editor of the paper and Sri Aurobindo's Cambridge friend, under the caption 'New Lamps for Old' vehemently denounced the then Congress policy of pray, petition and protest and called for a dynamic leadership based upon self-help and fearlessness. But this outspoken and irrefutable criticism was checked by the action of a Moderate leader who frightened the editor and thus prevented any full development of his ideas in the paper; he had to turn aside to generalities such as the necessity of extending the activities of the Congress beyond the circle of the bourgeois or middle class and calling into it the masses. Finally, Sri Aurobindo suspended all public activity of this kind and worked only in secret till 1905, but he contacted Tilak whom he regarded as the one possible leader for a revolutionary party and met him at the Ahmedabad Congress; there Tilak took him out of the pandal and talked to him for an hour in the grounds expressing his contempt for the Reformist movement and explaining his own line of action in Maharashtra.

Sri Aurobindo included in the scope of his revolutionary work one kind of activity which afterwards became an important item in the public programme of the Nationalist party. He encouraged the young men in the centres of work to propagate the Swadeshi idea which at that time was only in its infancy and hardly more than a fad of the few. One of the ablest men in these revolutionary groups was a Mahratta named Sakharam Ganesh Deuskar who was an able writer in Bengali (his family had been long domiciled in Bengal) and who had written a popular life of Shivaji in Bengali in which he first brought in the name of Swaraj, afterwards adopted by the Nationalists as their word for independence,—Swaraj became one item of the fourfold Nationalist programme. He published a book entitled *Desher Katha* describing in exhaustive detail the British commercial and industrial exploitation of India. This book had an immense repercussion in Bengal, captured the mind of young Bengal and assisted more than anything else in the preparation of the Swadeshi movement. Sri Aurobindo himself had always considered the shaking off of this economic yoke and the

development of Indian trade and industry as a necessary concomitant of the revolutionary endeavour.

As long as he was in the Baroda Service, Sri Aurobindo could not take part publicly in politics. Apart from that, he preferred to remain and act and even to lead from behind the scenes without his name being known in public; it was the Government's action in prosecuting him as editor of the *Bande Mataram* that forced him into public view. And from that time forward he became openly, what he had been for sometime already, a prominent leader of the Nationalist party, its principal leader in action in Bengal and the organiser there of its policy and strategy. He had decided in his mind the lines on which he wanted the country's action to run: what he planned was very much the same as was developed afterwards in Ireland as the Sinn Fein movement; but Sri Aurobindo did not derive his ideas, as some have represented, from Ireland, for the Irish movement became prominent later and he knew nothing of it till after he had withdrawn to Pondicherry. There was, moreover, a capital difference between India and Ireland which made his work much more difficult; for all its past history had accustomed the Irish people to rebellion against British rule and this history might be even described as a constant struggle for independence intermittent in its action but permanently there in principle; there was nothing of this kind in India. Sri Aurobindo had to establish and generalise the idea of independence in the mind of the Indian people and at the same time to push first a party and then the whole nation into an intense and organised political activity which would lead to the accomplishment of that ideal. His idea was to capture the Congress and to make it an instrument for revolutionary action instead of a centre of a timid constitutional agitation which would only talk and pass resolutions and recommendations to the foreign Government; if the Congress could not be captured, then a central revolutionary body would have to be created which could do this work. It was to be a sort of State within the State giving its directions to the people and creating organised bodies and institutions which would be its means of action; there must be an increasing non-cooperation and passive resistance which would render the administration of the country by a foreign Government difficult or finally impossible, a universal

unrest which would wear down repression and finally, if need be, an open revolt all over the country. This plan included a boycott of British trade, the substitution of national schools for the Government institutions, the creation of arbitration courts to which the people could resort instead of depending on the ordinary courts of law, the creation of volunteer forces which would be the nucleus of an army of open revolt, and all other action that could make the programme complete. The part Sri Aurobindo took publicly in Indian politics was of brief duration, for he turned aside from it in 1910 and withdrew to Pondicherry; much of his programme lapsed in his absence, but enough had been done to change the whole face of Indian politics and the whole spirit of the Indian people to make independence its aim and non-cooperation and resistance its method, and even an imperfect application of this policy heightening into sporadic periods of revolt has been sufficient to bring about the victory. The course of subsequent events followed largely the line of Sri Aurobindo's idea. The Congress was finally captured by the Nationalist party, declared independence its aim, organised itself for action, took almost the whole nation minus a majority of the Mohammedans and a minority of the depressed classes into acceptance of its leadership and eventually formed the first national, though not as yet an independent, Government in India and secured from Britain acceptance of independence for India.

At first Sri Aurobindo took part in Congress politics only from behind the scenes, as he had not yet decided to leave the Baroda Service; but he took long leave without pay in which, besides carrying on personally the secret revolutionary work, he attended the Barisal Conference broken up by the police and toured East Bengal along with Bepin Pal and associated himself closely with the forward group in the Congress. It was during this period that he joined Bepin Pal in the editing of the *Bande Mataram*, founded the new political party in Bengal and attended the Congress session at Calcutta at which the Extremists, though still a minority, succeeded under the leadership of Tilak in imposing part of their political programme on the Congress. The founding of the Bengal National College gave him the opportunity he needed and enabled him to resign his position in the Baroda Service and join the College as its Prin-

cipal. Subodh Mullick, one of Sri Aurobindo's collaborators in his secret action and afterwards also in Congress politics, in whose house he usually lived when he was in Calcutta, had given a lakh rupees for this foundation and had stipulated that Sri Aurobindo should be given a post of professor in the College with a salary of Rs. 150; so he was now free to give his whole time to the service of the country. Bepin Pal, who had been long expounding a policy of self-help and non-cooperation in his weekly journal, now started a daily with the name of *Bande Mataram*, but it was likely to be a brief adventure since he began with only Rs. 500 in his pocket and no firm assurance of financial assistance in the future. He asked Sri Aurobindo to join him in this venture to which a ready consent was given, for now Sri Aurobindo saw his opportunity for starting the public propaganda necessary for his revolutionary purpose. He called a meeting of the forward group of young men in the Congress and they decided then to organise themselves openly as a new political party joining hands with the corresponding group in Maharashtra under the proclaimed leadership of Tilak and to join battle with the Moderate Party which was done at the Calcutta session. He also persuaded them to take up the *Bande Mataram* daily as their party organ and a Bande Mataram Company was started to finance the paper, whose direction Sri Aurobindo undertook during the absence of Bepin Pal who was sent on a tour in the districts to proclaim the purpose and programme of the new party. The new party was at once successful and the *Bande Mataram* paper began to circulate throughout India. On its staff were not only Bepin Pal and Sri Aurobindo but some other very able writers, Shyam Sundar Chakravarty, Hemendra Prasad Ghose and Bejoy Chatterjee. Shyam Sundar and Bejoy were masters of the English language, each with a style of his own; Shyam Sundar caught up something like Sri Aurobindo's way of writing and later on many took his articles for Sri Aurobindo's. But after a a time dissensions arose between Bepin Pal on one side and the other contributors and the directors of the Company because of temperamental incompatibility and differences of political view especially with regard to the secret revolutionary action with which others sympathised but to which Bepin Pal was opposed. This ended soon in Bepin Pal's separation from the journal. Sri Aurobindo

would not have consented to this departure, for he regarded the qualities of Pal as a great asset to the *Bande Mataram*, since Pal, though not a man of action or capable of political leadership, was perhaps the best and most original political thinker in the country, an excellent writer and a magnificent orator: but the separation was effected behind Sri Aurobindo's back when he was convalescing from a dangerous attack of fever. His name was even announced without his consent in *Bande Mataram* as editor but for one day only, as he immediately put a stop to it since he was still formally in the Baroda Service and in no way eager to have his name brought forward in public. Henceforward, however, he controlled the policy of the *Bande Mataram* along with that of the party in Bengal. Bepin Pal had stated the aim of the new party as complete self-government free from British control; but this could have meant or at least included the Moderate aim of colonial self-government and Dadabhai Naoroji as President of the Calcutta session of the Congress had actually tried to capture the name of Swaraj, the Extremists' term for independents, for this colonial self-government. Sri Aurobindo's first preoccupation was to declare openly for complete and absolute independence as the aim of political action in India and to insist on this persistently in the pages of the journal; he was the first politican in India who had the courage to do this in public and he was immediately successful. The party took up the word Swaraj to express its own ideal of independence and it soon spread everywhere; but it was taken up as the ideal of the Congress much later on at the Karachi session of that body when it had been reconstituted and renovated under Nationalist leadership. The journal declared and developed a new political programme for the country as the programme of the Nationalist party, non-cooperation, passive resistance, Swadeshi, Boycott, national education, settlement of disputes in law by popular arbitration and other items of Sri Aurobindo's plan. Sri Aurobindo published in the paper a series of articles on passive resistance, another developing a political philosophy of revolution and wrote many leaders aimed at destroying the shibboleths and superstitions of the Moderate Party, such as the belief in British justice and benefits bestowed by foreign government in India, faith in British law courts and in the adequacy of the education given in schools

and universities in India and stressed more strongly and persistently than had been done the emasculation, stagnation or slow progress, poverty, economic dependence, absence of a rich industrial activity and all other evil results of a foreign government; he insisted especially that even if an alien rule were benevolent and beneficent, that could not be a substitute for a free and healthy national life. Assisted by this publicity the ideas of the Nationalists gained ground everywhere, especially in the Punjab which had before been predominantly Moderate. The *Bande Mataram* was almost unique in journalistic history in the influence it exercised in converting the mind of a people and preparing it for revolution. But its weakness was on the financial side; for the Extremists were still a poor man's party. So long as Sri Aurobindo was there in active control, he managed with great difficulty to secure sufficient public support for running the paper, but not for expanding it as he wanted, and when he was arrested and held in jail for a year, the economic situation of the *Bande Mataram* became desperate: finally, it was decided that the journal should die a glorious death rather than perish by starvation and Bejoy Chatterji was commissioned to write an article for which the Government would certainly stop the publication of the paper. Sri Aurobindo had always taken care to give no handle in the editorial articles of the *Bande Mataram* either for a prosecution for sedition or any other drastic action fatal to its existence; an editor of *The Statesman* complained that the paper reeked with sedition patently visible between every line, but it was so skilfully written that no legal action could be taken. The manœuvre succeeded and the life of the *Bande Mataram* came to an end in Sri Aurobindo's absence.

The Nationalist programme could only achieve a partial beginning before it was temporarily broken by severe government repression. Its most important practical item was Swadeshi plus Boycott; for Swadeshi much was done to make the idea general and a few beginnings were made, but the greater results showed themselves only afterwards in the course of time. Sri Aurobindo was anxious that this part of the movement should be not only propagated in idea but given a practical organisation and an effective force. He wrote from Baroda asking whether it would not be possible to bring in the industrialists and manufacturers and

gain the financial support of landed magnates and create an organisation in which men of industrial and commercial ability and experience and not politicians alone could direct operations and devise means of carrying out the policy; but he was told that it was impossible, the industrialists and the landed magnates were too timid to join in the movement, and the big commercial men were all interested in the import of British goods and therefore on the side of the *status quo*: so he had to abandon his idea of the organisation of Swadeshi and Boycott. Both Tilak and Sri Aurobindo were in favour of an effective Boycott of British goods—but of British goods only; for there was little in the country to replace foreign articles: so they recommended the substitution for the British of foreign goods from Germany and Austria and America so that the fullest pressure might be brought upon England. They wanted the Boycott to be a political weapon and not merely an aid to Swadeshi; the total Boycott of all foreign goods was an impracticable idea and the very limited application of it recommended in Congress resolutions was too small to be politically effective. They were for national self-sufficiency in key industries, the production of necessities and of all manufactures of which India had the natural means, but complete self-sufficiency or autarchy did not seem practicable or even desirable since a free India would need to export goods as well as supply them for internal consumption and for that she must import as well and maintain an international exchange. But the sudden enthusiasm for the Boycott of all foreign goods was wide and sweeping and the leaders had to conform to this popular cry and be content with the impulse it gave to the Swadeshi idea. National education was another item to which Sri Aurobindo attached much importance. He had been disgusted with the education given by the British system in the schools and colleges and universities, a system of which as a professor in the Baroda College he had full experience. He felt that it tended to dull and impoverish and tie up the naturally quick and brilliant and supple Indian intelligence, to teach it bad intellectual habits and spoil by narrow information and mechanical instruction its originality and productivity. The movement began well and many national schools were established in Bengal and many able men became teachers, but still the development was insufficient and the economical position of the

schools precarious. Sri Aurobindo had decided to take up the movement personally and see whether it could not be given a greater expansion and a stronger foundation, but his departure from Bengal cut short this plan. In the repression and the general depression caused by it, most of the schools failed to survive. The idea lived on and it may be hoped that it will one day find an adequate form and body. The idea of people's courts was taken up and worked in some districts, not without success, but this too perished in the storm. The idea of volunteer groupings had a stronger vitality; it lived on, took shape, multiplied its formations and its workers were the spearhead of the movement of direct action which broke out from time to time in the struggle for freedom. The purely political elements of the Nationalist programme and activities were those which lasted and after each wave of repression and depression renewed the thread of the life of the movement for liberation and kept it recognisably one throughout nearly fifty years of its struggle. But the greatest thing done in those years was the creation of a new spirit in the country. In the enthusiasm that swept surging everywhere with the cry of Bande Mataram ringing on all sides men felt it glorious to be alive and dare and act together and hope; the old apathy and timidity was broken and a force created which nothing could destroy and which rose again and again in wave after wave till it carried India to the beginning of a complete victory.

After the *Bande Mataram* case, Sri Aurobindo became the recognised leader of Nationalism in Bengal. He led the party at the session of the Bengal Provincial Conference at Midnapore where there was a vehement clash between the two parties. He now for the first time became a speaker on the public platform, addressed large meetings at Surat and presided over the Nationalist conference there. He stopped at several places on his way back to Calcutta and was the speaker at large meetings called to hear him. He led the party again at the session of the Provincial Conference at Hoogly. There it became evident for the first time that Nationalism was gaining the ascendant, for it commanded a majority among the delegates and in the Subjects Committee Sri Aurobindo was able to defeat the Moderates' resolution welcoming the Reforms and pass his own resolution stigmatising them as utterly inadequate

and unreal and rejecting them. But the Moderate leaders threatened to secede if this was maintained and to avoid a scission he consented to allow the Moderate resolution to pass, but spoke at the public session explaining his decision and asking the Nationalists to acquiesce in it in spite of their victory so as to keep some unity in the political forces of Bengal. The Nationalist delegates, at first triumphant and clamorous, accepted the decision and left the hall quietly at Sri Aurobindo's order so that they might not have to vote either for or against the Moderate resolution. This caused much amazement and discomfiture in the minds of the Moderate leaders who complained that the people had refused to listen to their old and tried leaders and clamoured against them, but at the bidding of a young man new to politics they had obeyed in disciplined silence as if a single body.

About this period Sri Aurobindo had decided to take up charge of a Bengali daily, *Nava Shakti*, and had moved from his rented house in Scotts Lane, where he had been living with his wife and sister, to rooms in the office of this newspaper, and there, before he could begin this new venture, early one morning while he was still sleeping, the police charged up the stairs, revolver in hand, and arrested him. He was taken to the police station and thence to Alipore Jail where he remained for a year during the magistrate's investigation and the trial in the Sessions Court at Alipore. At first he was lodged for some time in a solitary cell but afterwards transferred to a large section of the jail where he lived in one huge room with the other prisoners in the case; subsequently, after the assassination of the approver in the jail, all the prisoners were confined in contiguous but separate cells and met only in the court or in the daily exercise where they could not speak to each other. It was in the second period that Sri Aurobindo made the acquaintance of most of his fellow accused. In the jail he spent almost all his time in reading the Gita and the Upanishads and in intensive meditation and the practice of Yoga. This he pursued even in the second interval when he had no opportunity of being alone and had to accustom himself to meditation amid general talk and laughter, the playing of games and much noise and disturbance; in the first and third periods he had full opportunity and used it to the full. In the Sessions Court the accused were confined in a large prisoner's cage and here during

the whole day he remained absorbed in his meditation, attending little to the trial and hardly listening to the evidence. C. R. Das, one of his Nationalist collaborators and a famous lawyer, had put aside his large practice and devoted himself for months to the defence of Sri Aurobindo, who left the case entirely to him and troubled no more about it; for he had been assured from within and knew that he would be acquitted. During this period his view of life was radically changed; he had taken up Yoga with the original idea of acquiring spiritual force and energy and divine guidance for his work in life. But now the inner spiritual life and realisation which had continually been increasing in magnitude and universality and assuming a larger place took him up entirely and his work became a part and result of it and besides far exceeded the service and liberation of the country and fixed itself in an aim, previously only glimpsed, which was world-wide in its bearing and concerned with the whole future of humanity.

When he came out from jail Sri Aurobindo found the whole political aspect of the country altered; most of the Nationalist leaders were in jail or in self-imposed exile and there was a general discouragement and depression, though the feeling in the country had not ceased but was only suppressed and was growing by its suppression. He determined to continue the struggle; he held weekly meetings in Calcutta, but the attendance which had numbered formerly thousands full of enthusiasm, was now only of hundreds and had no longer the same force and life. He also went to places in the districts to speak and at one of these delivered his speech at Uttarpara in which for the first time he spoke publicly of his Yoga and his spiritual experiences. He started also two weeklies, one in English and one in Bengali, the *Karmayogin* and *Dharma* which had a fairly large circulation and were, unlike the *Bande Mataram*, easily self-supporting. He attended and spoke at the Provincial Conference at Barisal in 1909; for in Bengal owing to the compromise at Hoogly the two parties had not split altogether apart and both joined in the Conference though there could be no representative of the Nationalist Party at the meeting of the Central Moderate Body which had taken the place of the Congress. Surendra Nath Banerji had indeed called a private conference attended by Sri Aurobindo and one or two other leaders of the Nationalists to

discuss a project of uniting the two parties at the session in Benares and giving a joint fight to the dominant right wing of the Moderates; for he had always dreamt of becoming again the leader of a united Bengal with the Extremist Party as his strong right arm : but that would have necessitated the Nationalists being appointed as delegates by the Bengal Moderates and accepting the constitution imposed at Surat. This Sri Aurobindo refused to do; he demanded a change in that constitution enabling newly formed associations to elect delegates so that the Nationalists might independently send their representatives to the All-India session and on this point the negotiations broke down. Sri Aurobindo began, however, to consider how to revive the national movement under the changed circumstances. He glanced at the possibility of falling back on a Home Rule movement which the Government could not repress, but this, which was actually realised by Mrs. Besant later on, would have meant a postponement and a falling back from the ideal of independence. He looked also at the possibility of an intense and organised passive resistance movement in the manner afterwards adopted by Gandhi. He saw, however, that he himself could not be the leader of such a movement.

At no time did he consent to have anything to do with the sham Reforms which were all the Government at that period cared to offer. He held up always the slogan of 'no compromise' or, as he now put it in his Open Letter to his countrymen published in the *Karmayogin*, 'no co-operation without control.' It was only if real political, administrative and financial control were given to popular ministers in an elected Assembly that he would have anything to do with offers from the British Government. Of this he saw no sign until the proposal of the Montagu Reforms in which first something of the kind seemed to appear. He foresaw that the British Government would have to begin trying to meet the national aspiration half-way, but he would not anticipate that moment before it actually came. The Montagu Reforms came nine years after Sri Aurobindo had retired to Pondicherry and by that time he had abandoned all outward and public political activity in order to devote himself to his spiritual work, acting only by his spiritual force on the movement in India, until his prevision of real negotiations between the British Government and the Indian

leaders was fulfilled by the Cripps' proposal and the events that came after.

Meanwhile the Government were determined to get rid of Sri Aurobindo as the only considerable obstacle left to the success of their repressive policy. As they could not send him to the Andamans they decided to deport him. This came to the knowledge of Sister Nivedita and she informed Sri Aurobindo and asked him to leave British India and work from outside so that his work would not be stopped or totally interrupted. Sri Aurobindo contented himself with publishing in the *Karmayogin* a signed article in which he spoke of the project of deportation and left the country what he called his last will and testament; he felt sure that this would kill the idea of deportation and in fact it so turned out. Deportation left aside, the Government could only wait for some opportunity for prosecution for sedition and this chance came to them when Sri Aurobindo published in the same paper another signed article reviewing the political situation. The article was sufficiently moderate in its tone and later on the High Court refused to regard it as seditious and acquitted the printer. Sri Aurobindo one night at the *Karmayogin* office received information of the Government's intention to search the office and arrest him. While considering what should be his attitude, he received a sudden command from above to go to Chandernagore in French India. He obeyed the command at once, for it was now his rule to move only as he was moved by the divine guidance and never to resist and depart from it; he did not stay to consult with anyone, but in ten minutes was at the river *ghat* and in a boat plying on the Ganges; in a few hours he was at Chandernagore where he went into secret residence. He sent a message to Sister Nivedita asking her to take up the editing of the *Karmayogin* in his absence. This was the end of his active connection with his two journals. At Chandernagore he plunged entirely into solitary meditation and ceased all other activity. Then there came to him a call to proceed to Pondicherry. A boat manned by some young revolutionaries of Uttarpara took him to Calcutta; there he boarded the *Dupleix* and reached Pondicherry on April 4, 1910.

At Pondicherry, from this time onwards Sri Aurobindo's practice of Yoga became more and more absorbing. He dropped all participation in any public political activity, refused more than one request

to preside at the sessions of the restored Indian National Congress and made a rule of abstention from any public utterance of any kind not connected with his spiritual activities or any contribution of writings or articles except what he wrote afterwards in the *Arya*. For some years he kept up some private communication with the revolutionary forces he had led, through one or two individuals, but this also he dropped after a time and his abstention from any kind of participation in politics became complete. As his vision of the future grew clearer, he saw that the eventual independence of India was assured by the march of forces of which he became aware, that Britain would be compelled by the pressure of Indian resistance and by the pressure of international events to concede independence and that she was already moving towards that eventuality with whatever opposition and reluctance. He felt that there would be no need of armed insurrection and that the secret preparation for it could be dropped without injury to the nationalist cause, although the revolutionary spirit had to be maintained and would be maintained intact. His own personal intervention in politics would therefore be no longer indispensable. Apart from all this, the magnitude of the spiritual work set before him became more and more clear to him, and he saw that the concentration of all his energies on it was necessary. Accordingly, when the Ashram came into existence, he kept it free from all political connections or action; even when he intervened in politics twice afterwards on special occasions, this intervention was purely personal and the Ashram was not concerned in it. The British Government and numbers of people besides could not believe that Sri Aurobindo had ceased from all political action and it was supposed by them that he was secretly participating in revolutionary activities and even creating a secret organisation in the security of French India. But all this was pure imagination and rumour and there was nothing of the kind. His retirement from political activity was complete, just as was his personal retirement into solitude in 1910.

But this did not mean, as most people supposed, that he had retired into some height of spiritual experience devoid of any further interest in the world or in the fate of India. It could not mean that, for the very principle of his Yoga was not only to realise the Divine and attain to a complete spiritual consciousness, but also to take all

life and all world activity into the scope of this spiritual consciousness and action and to base life on the Spirit and give it a spiritual meaning. In his retirement Sri Aurobindo kept a close watch on all that was happening in the world and in India and actively intervened whenever necessary, but solely with a spiritual force and silent spiritual action; for it is part of the experience of those who have advanced far in Yoga that besides the ordinary forces and activities of the mind and life and body in Matter, there are other forces and powers that can act and do act from behind and from above; there is also a spiritual dynamic power which can be possessed by those who are advanced in the spiritual consciousness, though all do not care to possess or, possessing, to use it, and this power is greater than any other and more effective. It was this force which, as soon as he had attained to it, he used, at first only in a limited field of personal work, but afterwards in a constant action upon the world forces. He had no reason to be dissatisfied with the results or to feel the necessity of any other kind of action. Twice, however, he found it advisable to take in addition other action of a public kind. The first was in relation to the second World War. At the beginning he did not actively concern himself with it, but when it appeared as if Hitler would crush all the forces opposed to him and Nazism dominate the world, he began to intervene. He declared himself publicly on the side of the Allies, made some financial contributions in answer to the appeal for funds and encouraged those who sought his advice to enter the army or share in the war effort. Inwardly, he put his spiritual force behind the Allies from the moment of Dunkirk when everybody was expecting the immediate fall of England and the definite triumph of Hitler, and he had the satisfaction of seeing the rush of German victory almost immediately arrested and the tide of war begin to turn in the opposite direction. This he did, because he saw that behind Hitler and Nazism were dark Asuric forces and that their success would mean the enslavement of mankind to the tyranny of evil, and a set-back to the course of evolution and especially to the spiritual evolution of mankind: it would lead also to the enslavement not only of Europe but of Asia, and in it of India, an enslavement far more terrible than any this country had ever endured, and the undoing of all the work that had been done for her liberation. It was this

reason also that induced him to support publicly the Cripps' offer and to press the Congress leaders to accept it. He had not, for various reasons, intervened with his spiritual force against the Japanese aggression until it became evident that Japan intended to attack and even invade and conquer India. He allowed certain letters he had written in support of the war affirming his views of the Asuric nature and inevitable outcome of Hitlerism to become public. He supported the Cripps' offer because by its acceptance India and Britain could stand united against the Asuric forces and the solution of Cripps could be used as a step towards independence. When negotiations failed, Sri Aurobindo returned to his reliance on the use of spiritual force alone against the aggressor and had the satisfaction of seeing the tide of Japanese victory, which had till then swept everything before it, change immediately into a tide of rapid, crushing and finally immense and overwhelming defeat. He had also after a time the satisfaction of seeing his previsions about the future of India justify themselves so that she stands independent with whatever internal difficulties.

(*Sri Aurobindo was now in Calcutta and he was in his element. He had given up his Baroda job, its settled salary and seductive prospects without any hesitation.*)

Sri Aurobindo was present at the Congress in 1904 and again in 1906 and took a part in the counsels of the Extremist Party and in the formation of its fourfold programme—"Swaraj, Swadeshi, Boycott, National Education"—which the Moderate leaders after a severe tussle behind the scenes were obliged to incorporate in the resolutions of 1906. Bepin Pal had just started a daily paper *Bande Mataram* with only 500 rupees in his pocket. Sri Aurobindo took up the joint editorship of the Journal, edited the paper during Bepin Pal's absence and induced the Nationalist Party to take it up as their organ and finance it. He called a meeting of the party leaders at which it was decided at his instance to give up the behind-the-scenes jostlings with the Moderates, and declare an open war on Moderatism and place before the country what was practically a revolutionary propaganda. He gave up his Baroda job some time after this; he had taken indefinite leave without pay; for this reason

he did not take up officially and publicly the editorship of the *Bande Mataram* although after Bepin Pal left that post, he was practically in full control of the policy of the paper.

THE FIFTEENTH OF AUGUST 1947

August 15th is the birthday of free India. It marks for her the end of an old era, the beginning of a new age. But it has a significance not only for us, but for Asia and the whole world; for it signifies the entry into the comity of nations of a new power with untold potentialities which has a great part to play in determining the political, social, cultural and spiritual future of humanity. To me personally it must naturally be gratifying that this date which was notable only for me because it was my own birthday celebrated annually by those who have accepted my gospel of life, should have acquired this vast significance. As a mystic, I take this identification, not as a coincidence or fortuitious accident, but as a sanction and seal of the Divine Power which guides my steps on the work with which I began life. Indeed almost all the world movements which I hoped to see fulfilled in my lifetime, though at that time they looked like impossible dreams, I can observe on this day either approaching fruition or initiated and on the way to their achievement.

I have been asked for a message on this great occasion, but I am perhaps hardly in a position to give one. All I can do is to make a personal declaration of the aims and ideals conceived in my childhood and youth and now watched in their beginning of fulfilment, because they are relevant to the freedom of India, since they are a part of what I believe to be India's future work, something in which she cannot but take a leading position. For I have always held and said that India was arising, not to serve her own material interests only, to achieve expansion, greatness, power and prosperity,—though these too she must not neglect,—and certainly not like others to acquire domination of other peoples, but to live also for God and the world as a helper and leader of the whole human race. Those aims and ideals were in their natural order these : a revolution which would achieve India's freedom and her unity; the resurgence and

liberation of Asia and her return to the great role which she had played in the progress of human civilisation; the rise of a new, a greater, brighter and nobler life for mankind which for its entire realisation would rest outwardly on an international unification of the separate existence of the peoples, preserving and securing their national life but drawing them together into an overriding and consummating oneness; the gift by India of her spiritual knowledge and her means for the spiritualisation of life to the whole race; finally, a new step in the evolution which, by uplifting the consciousness to a higher level, would begin the solution of the many problems of existence which have perplexed and vexed humanity, since men began to think and to dream of individual perfection and a perfect society.

India is free but she has not achieved unity, only a fissured and broken freedom. At one time it almost seemed as if she might relapse into the chaos of separate States which preceded the British conquest. Fortunately there has now developed a strong possibility that this disastrous relapse will be avoided. The wisely drastic policy of the Constituent Assembly makes it possible that the problem of the depressed classes will be solved without schism or fissure. But the old communal division into Hindu and Muslim seems to have hardened into the figure of a permanent political division of the country. It is to be hoped that the Congress and the nation will not accept the settled fact as for ever settled or as anything more than a temporary expedient. For if it lasts, India may be seriously weakened, even crippled : civil strife may remain always possible, possible even a new invasion and foreign conquest. The partition of the country must go,—it is to be hoped by a slackening of tension, by a progressive understanding of the need of peace and concord, by the constant necessity of common and concerted action, even of an instrument of union for that purpose. In this way unity may come about under whatever form—the exact form may have a pragmatic but not a fundamental importance. But by whatever means, the division must and will go. For without it the destiny of India might be seriously impaired and even frustrated. But that must not be.

Asia has arisen and large parts of it have been liberated or are at this moment being liberated; its other still subject parts are moving through whatever struggles towards freedom. Only a

little has to be done and that will be done today or tomorrow. There India has her part to play and has begun to play it with an energy and ability which already indicate the measure of her possibilities and the place she can take in the council of the nations.

The unification of mankind is under way, though only in an imperfect initiative, organised but struggling against tremendous difficulties. But the momentum is there and, if the experience of history can be taken as a guide, it must inevitably increase until it conquers. Here too India has begun to play a prominent part and, if she can develop that larger statesmanship which is not limited by the present facts and immediate possibilities but looks into the future and brings it nearer, her presence may make all the difference between a slow and timid and a bold and swift development. A catastrophe may intervene and interrupt or destroy what is being done, but even then the final result is sure. For in any case the unification is a necessity in the course of Nature, an inevitable movement and its achievement can be safely foretold. Its necessity for the nations also is clear, for without it the freedom of the small peoples can never be safe hereafter and even large and powerful nations cannot really be secure. India, if she remains divided, will not herself be sure of her safety. It is therefore to the interest of all that union should take place. Only human imbecility and stupid selfishness could prevent it. Against that, it has been said, even the gods strive in vain; but it cannot stand for ever against the necessity of Nature and the Divine Will. Nationalism will then have fulfilled itself; an international spirit and outlook must grow up and international forms and institutions; even it may be such developments as dual or multilateral citizenship and a voluntary fusion of cultures may appear in the process of the change and the spirit of nationalism losing its militancy may find these things perfectly compatible with the integrity of its own outlook. A new spirit of oneness will take hold of the human race.

The spiritual gift of India to the world has already begun. India's spirituality is entering Europe and America in an ever increasing measure. That movement will grow; amid the disasters of the time more and more eyes are turning towards her with hope and there is even an increasing resort not only to her teachings, but to her psychic and spiritual practice.

The rest is still a personal hope and an idea and ideal which has begun to take hold both in India and in the West on forward-looking minds. The difficulties in the way are more formidable than in any other field of endeavour, but difficulties were made to be overcome and if the Supreme Will is there, they will be overcome. Here too, if this evolution is to take place, since it must come through a growth of the spirit and the inner consciousness, the initiative can come from India and although the scope must be universal, the central movement may be hers.

Such is the content which I put into this date of India's liberation; whether or how far or how soon this connection will be fulfilled, depends upon this new and free India.

15th August, 1947

"I must remind you that I have been an intellectual myself and no stranger to doubts—both the Mother and myself have had one side of the mind as positive and as insistent on practical results and more so than any Russell can be. We could never have been contented with the shining ideas and phrases which a Rolland or another takes for gold coin of Truth. We know well what is the difference between a subjective experience and a dynamic outward-going and realising Force. So although we have faith, (and who ever did anything great in the world without having faith in his mission or the Truth at work behind him ?) we do not found ourselves on faith alone, but on a great ground of knowledge which we have been developing and testing all our lives. I think I can say that I have been testing day and night for years upon years more scrupulously than any scientist his theory or his method on the physical plane." (*Pages* 377-378)

18-8-1932

"If absolute surrender, faith, etc. from the beginning were essential for Yoga, then nobody could do it. I myself could not have done it if such a condition had been demanded of me." (*Letters, Vol. II, Page* 502)

"It took me four years of inner striving to find a real way, even though the divine help was with me all the time, and even then,

it seemed to come by an accident; and it took me ten more years of intense Yoga under a supreme inner guidance to trace it out and that was because I had my past and the world's past to assimilate and overpass before I could find and found the future". (*Letters Vol. II. Page* 390)

"Zeal and enthusiasm are all right and very necessary but the spiritual condition combines calm with intensity. Psychic fire is different—what you are speaking of here is the rajasic vital fire of self-exertion, aggressive self-defence, exerting lawful rights, etc.

"I speak from my own experience. I have solid strength, but I have not much of the fire that blazes out against anybody who does not give me lawful rights. Yet I do not find myself weak or a dead man. I have always made it a rule not to be restless in any way, to throw away restlessness—yet I have been able to use my solid strength whenever necessary. You speak as if rajasic force and vehemence were the only strength and all else is deadness and weakness. It is not so—the calm spiritual strength is a hundred times stronger; it does not blaze up and sink again—but is steady and unshakable and perpetually dynamic."

21-10-1933 (*Pages* 280-281)

"I may also say that I did not leave politics because I felt I could do nothing more there; such an idea was very far from me. I came away because I did not want anything to interfere with my Yoga and because I got a very distinct *ādesh* in the matter. I have cut connection entirely with politics, but before I did so I knew from within that the work I had begun there was destined to be carried forward, on lines I had foreseen, by others, and that the ultimate triumph of the movement I had initiated was sure without my personal action or presence. There was not the least motive of despair or sense of futility behind my withdrawal." (*Page* 314)

October 1932

"To return to the Supramental: the Supramental is simply the direct self-existent Truth-Consciousness and the direct self-effective Truth-Power. There can therefore be no question of

jugglery about it. What is not true is not Supramental. As for calm and silence, there is no need of the Supramental to get that. One can get it even on the level of Higher Mind which is the next above the human intelligence. I got these things in 1908, 27 years ago, and I can assure you they were solid enough and marvellous enough in all conscience without any need of supramentality to make it more so. Again, "a calm that looks like action and motion" is a phenomenon of which I know nothing. A calm or silence that is what I have had—the proof is that out of an absolute silence of the mind I edited the *Bande Mataram* for 4 months and wrote 6 volumes of the *Arya*, not to speak of all the letters and messages etc. I have written since. If you say that writing is not an action or motion but only something that seems like it, a jugglery of the consciousness,—well, still out of that calm and silence I conducted the pretty strenuous political activity and have also taken my share in keeping up an Ashram which has at least an appearance to the physical senses of being solid and material ! If you deny that these things are material or solid (which of course, metaphysically you can), then you land yourself plump into Shankara's Illusionism, and there I will leave you". (*Pages* 238-239)

23-8-1935

"If one is conscious, one can stop it—(illness)—entering the physical, one can develop the power to do so. We have done that millions of times". (*Pages* 409-410)

26-3-1935

"The Mother and myself went for years through the utmost self-imposed bareness of life." (*Page* 375)

15-11-1933

"It is not clear what your Guru meant by my sitting on the path; that could have been true of the period between 1915 and 1920 when I was writing the *Arya*, but the sadhana and the work were waiting for the Mother's coming. In 1923 or 1924, I could not be described as sitting on the path, so far as the sadhana was concerned." (*Page* 366)

16-9-1935

"I know all about them (fits of depression and darkness and despair) myself—but my experience has led me to the perception that they are an unnecessary tradition and could be dispensed with if one chose." (*Letters, Vol. II, Page* 305)

"It began by the way as far back as in Alipore Jail when I got bitten in my cell by some very red and ferocious looking warrior ants and found to my surprise that pain and pleasure are conventions of our senses." (*Page* 316)

13-2-1932

"Yes, of course, I have been helping J. When somebody wants, really, to develop the literary power, I put some force to help him or her." (*Pages* 305-306)

11-6-1935

"Narayan Jyotishi, a Calcutta astrologer, who predicted, not knowing then who I was, in the days before my name was politically known, my struggle with Mleccha enemies and afterwards the three cases against me and my three acquittals, predicted also that though death was prefixed for me in my horoscope at the age of 63, I will prolong my life by Yogic power for a very long period and arrive at a full old age. In fact, I have got rid of by Yogic pressure of a number of chronic maladies that had got settled in my body."...(*Page* 287)

8-12-1949

"I can say little about the method K speaks of for getting rid of dead concepts....My own has been a sort of readjustment or rectification of positions and I should rather call it discrimination accompanied by a rearrangement of intuitions. At one time I had given much too big a place to "humanity" in my scheme of things with a number of ideas attached to that exaggeration which needed to be put right. But the change did not come by doubt about what I had conceived before, but by a new light on things in which "humanity" automatically stepped down and got into its right place and all the rest rearranged itself in consequence." (*Page* 220)

26-10-1934

"I see that you have persisted in giving a biography—is it really necessary or useful ? The attempt is bound to be a failure, because neither you nor anyone else knows anything at all of my life; it has not been on the surface for men to see.

"You have given a sort of account of my political action, but the impression it makes on me and would make, I believe, on your public is that of a fiery idealist rushing furiously at an impossible aim (knocking his head against a stone wall, which is not a very sensible proceeding) without any grasp of realities and without any intelligible political method or plan of action. The practical people of the West would hardly be well impressed by such a picture and it would make them suspect that, probably, my Yoga was a thing of the same type !"

"But why write my biography at all ? Is it really necessary? In my view, a man's value does not depend on what he learns, or his position or fame, or what he does, but on what he is and inwardly becomes." (*Pages* 351-352)

"You have to develop the power and the habit of taking refuge in the protection of the Mother and myself. It is for this reason that the habit of criticising and judging by the outer mind or cherishing its preconceived ideas and formations must disappear. You should repeat always to yourself when it tries to rise, "Sri Aurobindo and the Mother know better than myself—they have the experience and knowledge which I have not—they must surely be acting for the best and" in a greater light than that of ordinary human knowledge". (*Page* 403)

"The Mother's sleep is not sleep but an inner consciousness in which she is in connection with people or working everywhere."

(*Page* 407)

28-9-1936

"I had the same kind of violent objection to Gurugiri, but you see I was obliged by the irony of things or rather by the inexorable truth behind them to become a Guru and preach the Guruvad. Such is Fate." (*Pages* 317-318)

16-1-1936

"After travelling long in a boat I had once or twice the swaying sense of it after coming off it, as if the land about me was tossing like the boat—of course a subtle physical impression, but vivid enough." (*Page* 324)

4-4-1935

"Dreams of this kind can last for years and years after the waking consciousness has ceased to interest itself in things of that kind. The subconscient is exceedingly obstinate in the keeping of its old impressions. I find myself even recently having a dream of revolutionary activities or another in which the Maharaja of Baroda butted in, people and things I have not even thought of passingly for the last twenty years almost. I suppose it is because the very business of the subconscient in the human psychology is to keep all the past inside it and, being without conscious mentality, it clings to its office until the light has fully come down into it, illumining even its corner and crevices." (*Page* 327)

17-12-1934

"This is a lesson I have learnt from the experience both of my own mind and of the minds of others; the only way to get rid of doubt is to take discrimination as one's detector of truth and falsehood and under its guard to open the door freely and courageously to experience". (*Letters, Volume II, Page* 283)

"The object of such special issues is not to exhibit me to the public and show them all ends of me, i.e., to make me go through all my possible performances on a public stage. The object is to make the reading public better acquainted with the nature of this Yoga and the principle of what is being done in the Ashram. The private matters of the Ashram itself are *not* for the public—at most only so much as the public can see. *A fortiori* anything personal and private about me is also taboo. I come in only so far as it is necessary for the public to know my thought and what I stand for. You will notice that my life itself is so written as to give only the grey precise surface facts, nothing more. All propensity to make me figure in the big Barnum circus of journalistic "features" along with or in competition with Joe Zones, the prize-

fighter, Douglas Fairbanks, H.G. Wells, King George and Queen Mary, Haile Selassie, Hobbs, Hitler, Jack the Ripper (or any modern substitute of his) and Mussolini should be strictly banished from the mentality for evermore and the day after." (*Page* 340)

24-9-1935

"I have always had realisation by meditation first and the purification started afterwards as a result." (*Letters, Vol. II Page* 336)

"(Although in my case I walked into Nirvana without intending it or rather Nirvana walked casually into me not so far from the beginning of my Yogic career without asking my leave)." (*Letters, Vol. II Page* 348)

"If I tolerate a little writing about myself, it is only to have a sufficient counter-weight in that amorphous chaos, the public mind, to balance the hostility that is always aroused by the presence of a dynamic Truth in this world of Ignorance....If and so far as publicity serves the Truth, I am quite ready to tolerate it; but I do not find publicity for its own sake desirable." (*Letters, Vol. II Page* 478)

"No, the Supramental has not descended into the body or into Matter—it is at the point where such a descent has become not only possible but inevitable; I am speaking of course, of my experience." (*Letters, Vol. II, Page* 81)

14-11-1933

"We have not sought perfection for our own separate sake, but as part of a general change—creating a possibility of perfection for others." (*Letters, Vol. II, Page* 82)

August 1936

"I have had myself the experience of this rising to a height, during a certain stage of the spiritual development of things, that before hardly existed and seemed quite absent in the pure yogic life". (*Letters, Vol. II Pages* 375, 376)

"And then what Krishna must I challenge,—the Krishna of the Gita who is the transcendent Godhead, Paramatma, Parabrahma, Purushottama, the cosmic Deity, Master of the universe, Vasudeva who is all, the Immanent in the heart of all creatures, or the Godhead who was incarnate at Brindavan and Dwarka and Kurukshetra and who was the guide of my Yoga and with whom I realised identity ?" (*Page* 209)

25-2-1945

"But what strange ideas again !—that I was born with a supramental temperament and that I know nothing of hard realities ! Good God ! My whole life has been a struggle with hard realities, from hardship, starvation in England and constant dangers and fierce difficulties to the far greater difficulties continually cropping up here in Pondicherry, external and internal. My life has been a battle from its early years and is still a battle : the fact that I wage it now from a room upstairs and by spiritual means as well as others that are external makes no difference to its character. But, of course, as we have not been shouting about these things, it is natural, I suppose, for others to think that I am living in an august, glamorous, lotus-eating dreamland where no hard facts of life or Nature present themselves. But what an illusion all the same !" (*Pages* 224-225)

"My own sadhana when it was far more advanced than yours used to stop for half a year together. I did not make a fuss about it, but remained quiet till the empty or dull period was over." (*Page* 229)

8-3-1935

"I thought I had already told you that your turn towards Krishna was not an obstacle....If we consider the large and indeed predominant part he played in my own sadhana, it would be strange if the part he has in your sadhana could be considered

objectionable....If you reach Krishna you reach the Divine; if you can give yourself to him, you give yourself to me." (*Page* 210)

18-6-1943

"As to whether the Divine seriously means something to happen, I believe it is intended. I know with absolute certitude that the Supramental is a truth and that its advent is in the very nature of things inevitable. The question is as to the when and the how. That also is decided and predestined from somewhere above; but it is here being fought out amid a rather grim clash of conflicting forces. For in the terrestrial world the predetermined result is hidden and what we see is a whirl of possibilities and forces attempting to achieve something with the destiny of it all concealed from human eyes.... My faith and will are for the now." (*Pages* 233-234)

28-12-1934

"It is not because I have myself trod the sunlit way or flinched from difficulty and suffering and danger. I have had my full share of these things and the Mother has had ten times her full share. But that was because the finders of the Way had to face these things in order to conquer. No difficulty that can come on the sadhak but has faced us on the path; against many we have had to struggle hundreds of times....It is, in fact, to ensure an easier path to others hereafter that we have borne that burden....The sunlit path is not altogether a fable....

"But, you will ask, what of those who cannot? Well, it is for them I am putting forth all my efforts to bring down the Supramental Force within a measurable time." (*Pages* 371-372)

"I don't know that I have called myself a Superman. But certainly I have risen above the ordinary human mind, otherwise I would not think of trying to bring down the Supermind into the physical." (*Page* 217)

15-9-1935

"Q : I sometimes fear that eventually you and the Mother will retire into an extra-cosmic samadhi leaving the wicked world

to sink or swim as best it can. Perhaps that would be the wisest course—who knows ?

A : I have no intention of doing so—even if all smashed, I would look beyond the smash to the new creation. As for what is happening in the world, it does not upset me because I knew all along that things would happen in that fashion, and as for the hopes of the intellectual idealists I have not shared them, so I am not disappointed." (*Page* 231)

10-8-1933

"What I said was that behind visible events in the world there is always a mass of invisible forces at work unknown to the outward minds of men, and by Yoga, one can become conscious of these forces, intervene consciously in the play and to some extent at least determine things in the result of the play..."

"I can agree only that we have had a heavy time of it recently and that there has been a strong attack on the plane of the physical and material—but that (heavy attacks) is a thing we have been accustomed to for the last 30 years and it has never prevented us from making any necessary advance.

"No, I am not tired or on the point of giving up. I have made inwardly steps in front in the last two or three months which had seemed impossible because of the obstinate resistance for years together and it is not an experience which pushes me to despair and to give up. If there is much resistance on one side, there have been large gains on the other—all has not been a picture of sterile darkness." (*Letters, Vol. II Page* 85)

12-9-1934

"Even if I foresee an adverse result I must work for the one that I consider should be; for it keeps alive the force, the principle of Truth which I serve and gives it a possibility to triumph hereafter so that it becomes part of the working of the future favourable Fate, even if the fate of the hour is adverse...we do not live for outward result alone; far more the object of life is the growth of the soul, not outward success of the hour or even of the near future." (*Letters, Vol. II Pages* 561-2)

17-12-1936

"In the world outside there are much worse symptoms such as the general increase of cynicism, a refusal to believe in anything at all, a decrease of honesty, an immense corruption, a preoccupation with food, money, comfort, pleasure, to the exclusion of higher things, and a general expectation of worse and worse things awating the world. All that, however acute, is a temporary phenomenon for which those who know anything about the workings of the world-energy and the workings of the Spirit were prepared. I myself foresaw that this worst would come, the darkness of night before the dawn; therefore I am not discouraged. I know...and can see and feel the first signs of its coming. Those who seek for the Divine have to stand firm and persist in their seeking; after a time, the darkness will fade and begin to disappear and the Light will come." (*Pages* 243-244)

9-4-1947

"Now in these times of world-crisis when I have to be on guard and concentrated all the time to prevent irremediable catastrophes and have still to be so, and when, besides, the major movement of the inner spiritual work needs an equal concentration and persistence, it is not possible for me to abandon my rule. (Moreover, even for the individual sadhak it is in *his* interest that this major spiritual work should be done, for its success would create conditions under which his difficulties could be much more easily overcome.) All the same I have broken my rule, and broken it for you alone: I do not see how that can be interpreted as a want of love and a hard granite indifference." (*Pages* 267-268)

29-5-1942

"What is happening did not come to me as a surprise. I foresaw it when I was in Bengal and warned people that it was probable and almost inevitable and that they should be prepared for it. At that time no one attached any value to what I said, although some afterwards remembered and admitted, when the trouble first began, that I have been right; only C. R. Das had grave apprehensions and he even told me when he came to Pondicherry that he would not like the British to go out until this dangerous problem had been settled. But I have not been discouraged by what is happening,

because I know and have experienced hundreds of times that beyond the blackest darkness there lies for one who is a divine instrument the light of God's victory. I have never had a strong and persistent will for anything to happen in the world—I am not speaking of personal things—which did not eventually happen even after delay, defeat or even disaster. There was a time when Hitler was victorious everywhere and it seemed certain that a black yoke of the Asura would be imposed on the whole world; but where is Hitler now and and where is his rule ?" (*Pages* 242-243)

19-10-1946

"Finally, about financial arrangements. It has been an arduous and trying work for the Mother and myself to keep up this Ashram, with its ever-increasing numbers, to make both ends meet and at times to prevent deficit budgets and their results; specially in this war time, when the expenses have climbed to a dizzy and fantastic height, only one accustomed to these things or who had similar responsibilities can understand what we have gone through. Carrying on anything of this magnitude without any settled income could not have been done if there had not been the working of a divine Force. Works of charity are not part of our work, there are other people who can see to that. We have to spend all on the work we have taken in hand and what we get is nothing compared to what is needed....

"I am writing only on the surface and I do not speak of what is behind or from the Yogic standpoint, the standpoint of the Yogic consciousness from which we act; that would be more difficult to express. This is merely for intellectual satisfaction and there there is always room for dispute." (*Pages* 615-616)

25-2-1945

"The volume of the correspondence is becoming enormous and it takes me all the night and good part of the day—apart from the work done separately by the Mother who has also to work the greater part of the night in addition to her day's work." (*Page* 399)

19-12-1933

"You do not realise that I have to spend 12 hours over the ordinary correspondence, numerous reports, etc. I work 3 hours

in the afternoon and the whole night up to 6 in the morning over this. So if I get a long letter with many questions I may not be able to answer it all at once. To get into such a disturbance over it and want to throw off the Yoga is qute unreasonable." (*Page* 266)

17-6-1933

"When I concentrate, I work upon others, upon the world, upon the play of forces. What I say is that to spend all the time reading and writing letters is not sufficient for the purpose. I am not asking to become a meditative Sannyasi." (*Page* 200)

19-12-1934

"About the correspondence, I would be indeed a brainless fool if I made it the central aim of my life to con an absurd mountain of letters and leave all higher aims aside ! If I have given importance to the correspondence, it is because it was an effective instrument towards my central purpose....No doubt also it was not the correspondence in itself but the Force that was increasing in its pressure on the physical nature which was able to do all this, but a canalisation was needed, and this served the purpose...." (*Pages* 257-258)

12-1-1934

"If we had lived physically in the Supermind from the beginning nobody could have been able to approach us nor could any sadhana have been done. There could have been no hope of contact between ourselves and the earth and men. Even as it is, Mother has to come down towards the lower consciousness of the sadhaks instead of keeping always in her own, otherwise they begin to say, "How far away, how severe you were; you do not love me, I get no help from you, etc., etc.", The Divine has to veil himself in order to meet the human." (*Pages* 357-358)

"I do not understand your point about raising up a new race by my going on writing 'trivial' letters ten hours a day. Of course not—nor by writing important letters either; even if I were to spend my time writing fine poems it would not build up a new race. Each activity is important in its own place—an electron or a molecule or a grain may be small things in themselves, but in

their place they are indispensable to the building up of a world...." (*Page* 259)

December 1933

"But I do not understand how all that can prevent me from answering mental questions. On my own showing, if it is necessary for the Divine purpose, it has to be done. Sri Ramakrishna himself answered thousand of questions, I believe...." (*Page 261*)

"What I write usually helps only the mind and that too very little, for people do not really understand what I write—they put their own constructions on it. The inner help is quite different and there can be no confusion with it, for it reaches the substance of the consciousness, not the mind only."

"I never point out to anybody his defects unless he gives me the occasion. A sadhak must become conscious and lay himself before the light, see and reject and change. It is not the right method for us to interfere and lecture and point out this and point out that. That is the school-master method—it deos not work in the spiritual change." (*Page* 263)

10-5-1936

"Q : Is it not true that the letters we receive from you are full of powers ?

A : Yes, power is put into them." (*Page* 261)

24-9-1933

"It is an undoubted fact proved by hundreds of instances that for many the exact statement of their difficulties to us is the best and often, though not always, an immediate, even an instantaneous means of release. This has often been seen by sadhaks not only here, but far away, and not only for inner difficulties, but for illness and outer pressure of unfavourable circumstances." (*Page* 400)

17-12-1932

"My help and the Mother's will be there working behind even in the moments when you cannot feel it". (*Letters, Vol. II, Page* 455)

"I myself foresaw that this worst would come, the darkness of night before the dawn; therefore I am not discouraged. I know what is preparing behind the darkness and can see and feel the first signs of its coming." (*Letters, Vol II, Page* 458)

9-4-1947

"As for the Force, I shall write some other time. I have told you that it is not always efficacious, but works under conditions like all forces; it is only the supramental Force that works absolutely, because it creates its own conditions. But the Force I am using is a Force that has to work under the present world conditions. It is not the less a Force for that. I have cured myself of all illnesses except three by it and those too when they come I have kept in check; the fact that I have not succeeded yet in eliminating the fact or probability of those three does not cancel the fact of my success with the others." (*Page* 408)

6-2-1935

"I have always said that the spiritual force I have been putting on human affairs such as the War is not the supramental but the Overmind force, and that when it acts in the material world is so inextricably mixed up in the tangle of the lower world forces that its results, however strong or however adequate to the immediate object, must necessarily be partial. That is why I am getting a birthday present of a free India on August 15, but complicated by its being presented in two packets as two free Indias: this is a generosity I could have done without, one free India would have been enough for me if offered as an unbroken whole." (*Page* 245)

7-7-1947

"Mother knows all these things by other means and any information given to her only adds certain physical precisions to what she knows already.

"The Mother besides sees things in vision and receives the thoughts of the sadhaks at Pranam and other times.... Only the Mother never acts on these supraphysical intimations unless there is physical confirmation like the letter itself in this case. For nobody would understand her action—the sadhaks living in the physical mind would state her action unfounded, and those affected would

deny loudly—as many have done in the past—their secret thoughts, feelings and actions. I tell you all this in confidence so that you may understand what is the real basis of Mother's letters to X."

(*Page* 541)

10-9-1936

"I have not yet written about the Force because it is too complex to be adequately stated in a short space and I had no time these days for anything long. Anyhow, the clue is that the Force does not act in a void and in an absolute way, like writing on a blank paper or on the air : "Let there be Light and there was Light" formula. It comes as a Force intervening and acting on a very complex nexus of Forces that were in action and displacing their disposition,...movement and result.

"It meets in so doing a certain opposition, very often a strong opposition from many of the forces already in possession and operation. To overcome it three factors are needed : (1) the power of the Force itself, i.e., its own sheer pressure and direct action on the field of action (here the man, his condition, his body); (2) the instrument (yourself); and (3) the instrumentation (treatment, medicine).

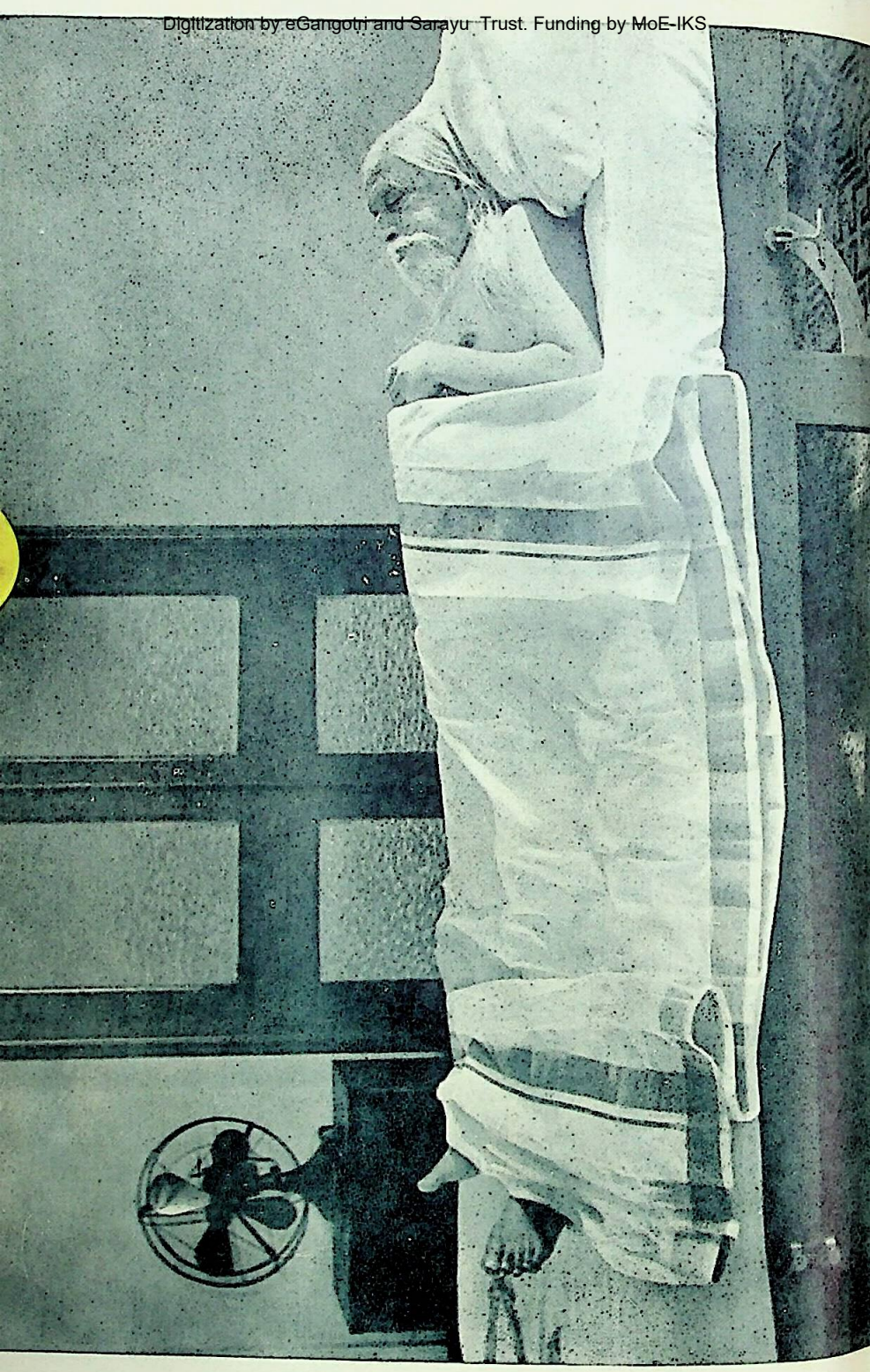
"I have often used the Force alone, without any human instrument or outer means, but here all depends upon the recipient and his receptivity—unless, as in the case of healers, there are unseen beings or powers that assist." (*Pages* 282-283)

24-1-1936

"CERTAINLY, my force is not limited to the Ashram and its conditions. As you know it is being largely used for helping the right development of the war and of change in the human world. It is also used for individual purposes outside the scope of the Ashram and the practice of Yoga; but that, of course, is silently done and mainly by a spiritual action."...(*Pages* 276-277)

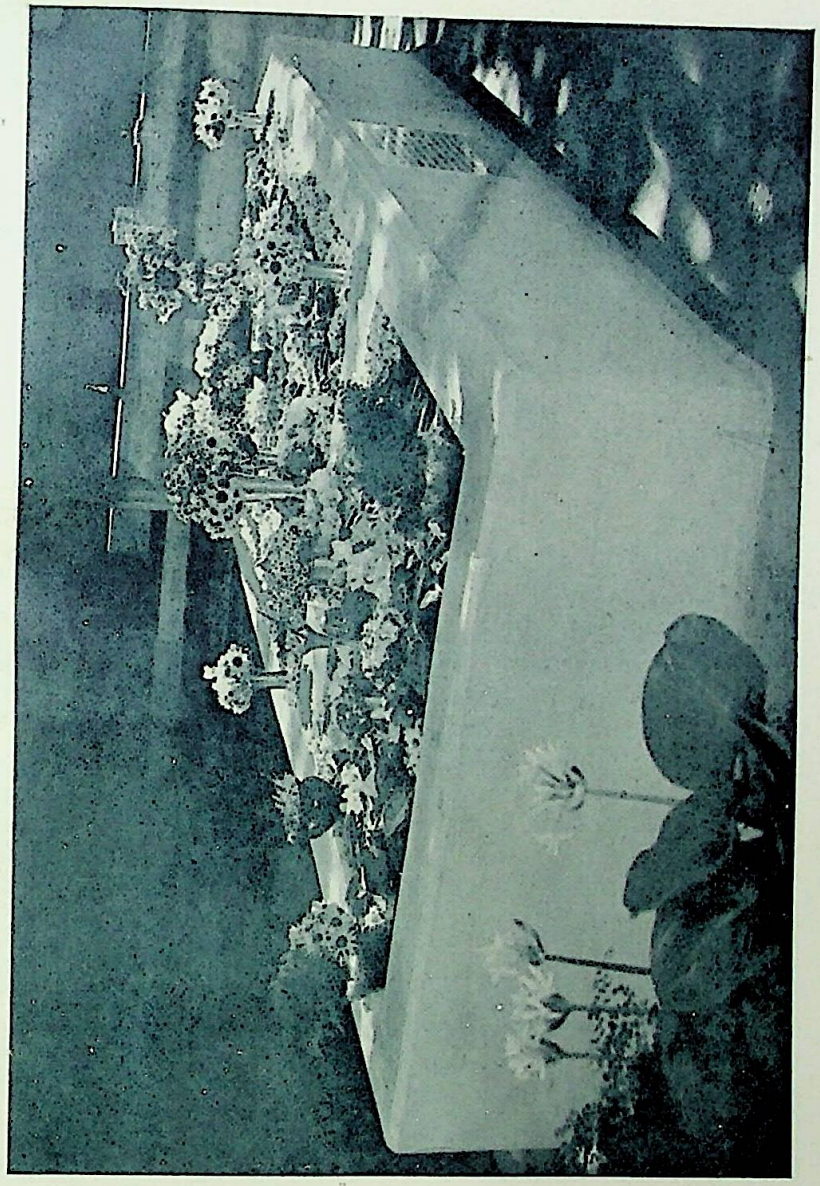
13-3-1944

"If I have to help somebody to repel an attack, I can't do it by only writing a note, I have to send him some Force or else concentrate and do the work for him." (*Page* 201)



Sri Aurobindo

Mahasamadhi : 5th December, 1950



Sri Aurobindo Samadhi

APPENDIX

I

That Pondicherry—again!

I WENT out in 1947 when India was on the eve of securing her partitioned freedom. On my return-journey in the month of July 1947, I became conscious of the fact that it was my return to a place where I had passed twenty-five years at a stretch. The memory of my first visit in 1918 awoke in me all the old impressions vividly. I saw then that even at that early period Sri Aurobindo was for me the embodiment of the Supreme Consciousness. I mentally began to search for the exact time-moment when I came to know him. Travelling far into the past I found it was in 1914 when I read a notice in the Bombay Chronicle about the publication of a monthly magazine—the Arya—from Pondicherry by Sri Aurobindo. I hastened to register my name in advance. In those days of political storms to avoid the suspicion of the college authorities and the police I had ordered the magazine to be delivered to an address outside the college. Sri Aurobindo then appeared to me to be the personification of the ideal of life divine which he so ably put before humanity in the "Arya".

But the question: "why did I order the "Arya ?" remained. On trying to find an answer I found that I had known him before the appearance of the "Arya".

The Congress broke up at Surat in 1907. Sri Aurobindo had played a prominent part in that historical session. From Surat he came to Baroda and at Vankaner Theatre and at Prof. Manik Rao's old gymnasium in Dandia Bazar he delivered several speeches which not only took the audiance by storm but changed entirely the course of many lives. I also had heard him without understanding everything that was spoken. But ever since I saw him I had the constant feeling that he was one known to me and so my mind could not fix

the exact time moment when I knew him. It is certain that the connection seemed to begin with the great tidal wave of national movement in the political life of India; but I think it was only the apparent beginning. The years between 1903 to 1910 were those of unprecedented awakening and revolution. The generations that followed also witnessed two or three powerful floods of the national movement. But the very first onrush of the newly awakened national consciousness of India was unique. That tidal wave in its initial onrush defined the goal of India's political ideal—an independent republic of India. Alternating movements of ebb and tide in the national movement followed till in 1947 the goal was reached. The lives of leaders and workers, who rode willingly and with delight, on the dangerous crest of the tidal wave, underwent great transformations. Our small group in Gujrat got its goal defined, —the winning of undiluted freedom for India.

All the energies of the leaders were taken up by the freedom movement. Only a few among them attempted to see beyond the horizon of political freedom some ideal of human perfection; for, after all, freedom was not the ultimate goal but a condition for the expression of the cultural Spirit of India. In Swami Shraddhananda, Pandit Madanmohan Malvia, Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi—to name some leaders,—we see the double aspect of the inspiration. Among all the visions of perfection of the human Spirit on earth, I found the synthetic and integral vision of Sri Aurobindo the most rational and the most satisfying. It meets the need of the individual and collective life of man of today. It is the international form of the fundamental elements of Indian culture. It is, as Prof. Shishir Kumar Maitra says, the message which holds out hope in the world of despair.

This aspect of Sri Aurobindo's vision attracted me equally as the natural affinity which I felt on seeing him. I found on making a serious study of the *Arya* that it lead me to very rational conclusions with regard to the solutions of the deepest problems of life. I opened correspondence with him and in 1916, with his permission, began to translate the *Arya* in Gujrati.

But though I had seen him from a distance and felt an unaccountable familiarity with him, still I had not yet met him personally. When the question of putting into execution the revolutionary plan,

which Sri Aurobindo had given to my brother—C.B.Purani—at Baroda, in 1907, arose I thought it better to obtain Sri Aurobindo's consent to it. Barin had given the formula for preparing bombs to my brother, and I was also very impatient to begin the work. But still we thought it necessary to consult the great leader who gave us the inspiration as lives of many young men were involved in the plan.

I had an introduction to Sj. V.V.S.Aiyar who was then staying at Pondicherry. It was in December 1918 that I reached Pondicherry. I did not stay long with Mr. Aiyar. I took up my bundle of books—mainly the *Arya* volumes—and went to No. 40, Rue François Martin, the Arya office, which was also Sri Aurobindo's residence. The house looked a little queer,—on the right side, as one entered were a few plantain trees and by its side a heap of broken tiles. On the left at the edge of the open courtyard four doors giving entrance to four rooms were seen. The verandah outside was wide. It was about 8 in the morning. The time for meeting Sri Aurobindo was fixed at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. I waited all the time in the house, occasionally chatting with the two inmates who were there.

Sri Aurobindo was sitting on a wooden chair behind a small table covered with indigo-blue cloth in the verandah upstairs when I went up to meet him. I felt a spiritual light surrounding his face. His look was penetrating. He knew me by my correspondence. I reminded him about my brother having met him at Baroda; he had not forgotten him. Then I informed him that our group was now ready to start revolutionary activity. It had taken us about eleven years to organise.

Sri Aurobindo remained silent for sometime. Then he put me questions about my sadhana, spiritual practice. I described my efforts and added : "Sadhana is all right,—but it is difficult to concentrate on it so long as India is not free."

"Perhaps it may not be necessary to resort to revolutionary activity to free India" he said.

"But without that how is the British Government to go from India ?" I asked him.

"That is another question; but if India can be free without

revolutionary activity, why should you execute the plan ? It is better to concentrate on yoga—spiritual development" he replied.

"But India is a land that has sadhana in its blood. When India is free, I believe, thousands will devote themselves to yoga. But in the world of to-day who will listen to the truth or spirituality of slaves ?" I asked him.

He replied : "India has already decided to win freedom and so there will certainly be found leaders and men to work for that goal. But all are not called to yoga. So, when you have the call, is it not better to concentrate upon it ? If you want to carry out the revolutionary programme you are free to do it, but I cannot give my consent to it."

"But it was you who gave us the inspiration and the start for revolutionary activity. Why do you now refuse to give your consent to its execution ?" I asked.

"Because I have done the work and I know its difficulties. Young men come forward to join the movement being goaded by idealism and enthusiasm. But these elements do not last long. It becomes very difficult to observe and extract discipline. Small groups begin to form within the organisation, rivalries grow between groups and even between individuals. There is competition for leadership. The agents of the Government generally manage to join these organisations from the very beginning. And so they are unable to act effectively. Sometimes they sink so low as to quarrel even for money" he said calmly.

"But even supposing that I grant sadhana, i.e., yoga as of greater importance and even intellectually understand that I should concentrate upon it,—my difficulty is that I feel intensely that I must do something for the freedom of India. I have been unable to sleep soundly for the last two years and a half. I can remain quiet if I make a very strong effort. But the concentration of my whole being turns towards India's freedom. It is difficult for me to sleep till that is secured."

Sri Aurobindo remained silent for two or three minutes. It was a long pause. Then he said : "Suppose an assurance is given to you that India will be free ?"

"Who can give such an assurance ?" I could feel the echo of doubt and challenge in my own question.

Again he remained silent for three or four minutes. Then he looked at me and added : "Suppose I give you the assurance?"

I paused for half-a-minute—considered the question with myself and said : "If you give the assurance, I can accept it."

"Then, I give you the assurance that India will be free", he said in a serious tone.

My work was over,—the purpose of my visit to Pondicherry was served. My personal question and the problem of our group was solved ! I then conveyed to him the message of Sj. K.G. Deshpande from Baroda. I told him that financial help could be arranged from Baroda, if necessary, to which he replied, "At present what is required comes from Bengal, especially from Chandernagore. So, there is no need."

When the talk turned to Prof. D.L.Purohit of Baroda, Sri Aurobindo recounted the incident of his visit to Pondicherry when he came here to inquire into the relation between the Church and the State. He paid a courtesy call to Sri Aurobindo as he knew him at Baroda. This resulted in his resignation from the Baroda State service on account of the pressure of the British Residency. I conveyed to Sri Aurobindo the good news that after his resignation Mr. Purohit started practice as a lawyer and was quite successful, earning more than the pay he was getting as a professor. It was time for me to leave. The question of Indian freedom again arose in my mind, and at the time of taking leave, after I had got up to depart, I could not repress the question,—it was a question of life for me—"Are you quite sure that India will be free ?"

I did not at that time realise the full import of my question. I wanted a guarantee, and though the assurance was given my doubts had not completely disappeared.

Sri Aurobindo became very serious. His gaze was fixed at the sky that appeared beyond the window. Then he looked at me and putting his fist on the table he said:

"You can take it from me, it is as certain as the rising of the Sun tomorrow. The decree has already gone forth, it may not be long in coming".

I bowed down to him. That day I was able to sleep soundly in the train after nearly two years. And in my mind was fixed for ever the picture of that scene : two of us standing near the small

table, my earnest question, that upward gaze, and that quiet and firm voice with power in it to shake the world, that firm fist planted on the table,—the symbol of self-confidence of the divine Truth. There may be rank Kaliyug, the Iron Age, in the whole world but it is the great fortune of India that she has sons who know the Truth and have the unshakable faith in it, and can risk their lives for its sake. In this significant fact is contained the divine destiny of India and of the world.

After meeting Sri Aurobindo I was quite relieved of the great strain, I felt that Indian freedom was a certainty. I could thus participate in public movements with equality and with a truer spiritual attitude. I got some experiences also which confirmed my faith in Sri Aurobindo's path. I got the confident faith in a divine Power that is beyond time and space and that can and does work in the world. I came to know that any man with a sincere aspiration for it can come in contact with that Power.

There were people who thought that Sri Aurobindo had retired from life, that he did not take interest in the world and its affairs. These ideas never troubled me. On the contrary, I felt that his work was of tremendous significance for humanity and its future. In fact, the dynamic aspect of his spirituality, his insistence on life as a field for the manifestation of the Spirit, and his great synthesis added to the attraction I had already felt. To me he appeared as the spiritual Sun of modern times shedding his light on mankind from the height of his consciousness and Pondicherry where he lived was a place of pilgrimage.

Second time I met Sri Aurobindo in 1921 when there was a greater familiarity. Having come for a short stay, I remained eleven days on Sri Aurobindo's asking me to prolong my stay. During my journey from Madras to Pondicherry I was enchanted by the natural scenery—the vast stretches of green paddy fields. But Pondicherry as a city was dull, lethargic, with a colonial atmosphere —an exhibition of the worst elements of European and Indian culture. The market was dirty and stinking and people had no idea of sanitation. The sea-beach was spoiled by the people, smuggling was the main business.

But the greatest surprise of my visit in 1921 was the "Darshan" of Sri Aurobindo. During the interval of two years his body had

undergone a transformation which could only be described as miraculous. In 1918 the colour of the body was like that of an ordinary Bengali—rather dark—though there was lustre on the face and the gaze was penetrating. On going upstairs to see him (in the same house) I found his cheeks wore apple pink colour and the whole body glowed with a soft creamy white light. So great and unexpected was the change that I could not help exclaiming: "What has happened to you ?"

Instead of giving a direct reply he parried the question—as I had grown a beard—"And what has happened to you ?"

But afterwards in course of talk he explained to me that when the higher consciousness descends from the mental level to the vital and even below the vital then great transformation takes place in the nervous and even in the physical being. He asked me to join the meditation in the afternoon and also the evening sittings.

This time I saw the Mother for the first time. She was standing near the staircase when Sri Aurobindo was going upstairs after lunch. Such unearthly beauty I had never seen,—she appeared to be about 20 years whereas she was more than 35 years old.

I found the atmosphere of the Ashram tense. The Mother and Datta, i.e., Miss Hudson, had come to stay in No. 40, Rue François Martin. The house had undergone a great change. There was a clean garden in the open courtyard, every room had simple and decent furniture,—a mat, a chair and a small table. There was an air of decency and order. This was, no doubt, the effect of the Mother's presence. But yet the atmosphere was tense because Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were engaged in fighting with forces of the vital plane.

Only a few days before my arrival a dismissed cook had managed to get stones hurled at Sri Aurobindo's house through the agency of a Mohamedan occultist. This was the topic of excited talk when I was at Pondicherry. Upendranath Banerjee, who hardly believed in the possibility of such occult phenomena, went to the terrace with a lantern and lathi to find the culprit. I heard the whole story from Upen himself. The stone-falling ended when the Mother took the matter in her hands and removed the servant-boy, who was the medium, to another house. (the account of this is already given.)

The Prabartak Sangh was started at Chandernagore by Motilal Roy and others under the inspiration of Sri Aurobindo. In the yoga of Sri Aurobindo life is accepted as the field for the manifestation of the Divine. Its main aim is not liberation merely but the manifestation of divine perfection. In his vision not merely the individual but the collectivity also is the term of the Divine. Acceptance of life includes the collective life.

There is a deeper reason for accepting life. In his vision of the Reality Sri Aurobindo shows the rationality and the inevitability of an ascent to a higher consciousness than Mind by man. This ascent to the Higher Consciousness must lead to its descent in man. If this new-element, the Supermind, is to become a permanent part of the earth-consciousness then not only should it descend into the lowest plane of physical consciousness—the subconscient—but must become a part of the collective consciousness on earth.

I asked him many questions about the organisation of collective lifeb ased on spiritual aspiration.

On the last day of my stay of eleven days I met Sri Aurobindo between 3 and 4 in the afternoon. The main topic was sadhana.

When I got up to take leave of him I asked him :

"What are you waiting for ?" I put the question because it was clear to me that he had been constantly living in the Higher Consciousness. "It is true," he said, "that the Divine Consciousness has descended but it has not yet descended into the physical being. So long as that work is not done the work cannot be said to be accomplished."

I bowed down to him. When I got up to look at his face, I found he had already gone to the entrance of his room and from the one leaf of the door I saw him turning his face with a smile towards me. I felt a great elation when I boarded the train: for, here was a guide who has already attained the Divine Consciousness, is conscious about it, and yet whose detachment and discrimination is so perfect, whose sincerity is so profound, that he knows what has yet to be attained and can go on unobtrusively doing his hard work for mankind. External forms have a secondary place in his scale

of values. In an effort so great lies some divine element; to be called to such an ideal is itself the greatest good fortune.

The freedom of India which he has assured came and I was fortunate to live to see it arrive on his auspicious birthday, the 15th of August 1947. It was to his Pondicherry that I was returning.

I had lived there for more than a generation but had never felt Pondicherry Ashram as something fixed and unchanging. I realised it on the day when I was returning to it. I found that Pondicherry has been to me the symbol of a great experiment, of a divine ideal. It is marching every hour towards the ultimate goal of man's upward ascent to the Divine. Not a city but a spiritual laboratory, a collective-being with a daily changing horizon yet pursuing a fixed distant objective, a place, fixed to the outer view but constantly moving—Pondicherry to me has always been like the Arab's tent.

II

Dilip's Interview

Before I begin my interview, it is necessary to refer to an occult phenomenon :

The context is this : a friend of mine was visited in an omnibus (where she had no friend to help) with a terrible heart-attack of thrombosis and felt she was dying. She prayed to Sri Aurobindo and Mother and lo, she was cured "miraculously" and that in five minutes with not a trace of weakness left ! She was impressed because thrombosis attacks leave their victims weak and waifs. I wrote to Sri Aurobindo whether she was imagining things or whether Mother had actually been aware of her appeal for help. To this Sri Aurobindo wrote back in a letter dated 24th March 1949 :

"As to her experience, certainly her call for help did reach Mother even though all the details she relates in her letter might not have been present to the Mother's physical mind. Always calls of this kind are coming to the Mother, sometimes a hundred close upon each other and always the answer is given. The occasions are

of all kinds, but whatever the need that occasions the call, the Force is there to answer it. That is the principle of this action on the occult plane. It is not of the same kind as an ordinary human action and does not need a written or oral communication from the one who calls : an interchange of psychic communication is quite sufficient to set the Force at work. At the same time it is not an impersonal Force and the suggestion of a divine energy that is there ready to answer and satisfy anybody who calls it is not at all relevent here. It is something personal to the Mother and if she had not this power and this kind of action she would not be able to do her work; but this is quite different from the outside practical working on the material plane where the methods must, necessarily, be different, although the occult working and the material working can and do join and the occult power gives to the material working its utmost efficacy. (*Among the Great, Page* 320)

Now for a personal experience !

I returned to Calcutta from Pondicherry in 1924 in a state of mind where the last traces of optimism, not to mention self-confidence, had been expunged now that there was no prospect of initiation in the near future. Do what I would, I could not keep my mind from brooding on his last words tantamount to a rebuff: "Yours is still a mental seeking : for my Yoga something more is needed." (*Page* 321)

At this juncture I heard a lecture of Swami Abhedananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. He spoke among other things of *vairagya mevabhayam* and explained forcefully why turning away from life must mean deliverance from fear and bondage. I approached him and he kindly agreed to give me *diksha*—that is, initiation. But a friend of mine, a quondam disciple of Sri Aurobindo, intervened at the psychological moment and took me to consult a friend of his, a Yogi with remarkable occult powers. It was in a far-off village where we had to be his guests for the night. I told him how desperate was my need of a Guru and sought his advice. "Sit down and close your eyes," was all the answer he made. A little nettled, I obeyed all the same.

I don't know how long we sat there with closed eyes for a deepening peace had made me lose count of the passage of time; it

filled every crevice of my thirsty soul. My friend gave me a nudge. I opened my eyes to meet my host's scrutinising me. He smiled. "But why are you hunting for a guru," he asked me abruptly, "now that Sri Aurobindo himself has accepted you ?"

"But how can that be ?" I asked sceptically. "I told you he hasn't."

"But I tell you he has."

My heart skipped a beat. "I don't understand," I faltered out, "Will you have the goodness to be a little more explicit ?"

"But it is simplicity itself," He returned bluntly with a half smile; then, appraising me for a second or two, added almost casually : "He just appeared there—yes, just behind you—and told me to advise you to wait. He asked me to tell you that he would draw you to him as soon as you were ready. Is that explicit enough ?"

His eyes twinkled in irony. I was puzzled : was he laughing at me —but then—

"Look here," he chimed in in his downright way, "shall I tell you something more convincing still ?"

I held his eyes....My heart beat faster.

He seemed to deliberate for a moment before he added : "Tell me : do you happen to have some ailment in your left abdomen ?"

I stared at him in blank surprise. "But how did you know ?"

"I didn't—that is, not before he told me."

"T—told you ?" I stammered. "B—but who ?"

He smiled in evident amusement. "Who else but your Guru—who came to tell me that you had already been advised by him to wait till the ailment was cured before you practised Yoga." He paused for a moment and then added : "But what is it ?"

"It—it is hernia. A tug-of-war caused the rupture."

He beamed, a picture of complacency. "That explains it. For Yoga will mean pressure on these parts, the vitals. May be that's why he asked you to wait till it healed up."

"There you are wrong." I demurred. "For he told me that my seeking was a mental one." Then I related to him the gist of our conversation in Pondicherry.

He listened very attentively and when I had come to the end of my story looked very kindly at me and said : "It's quite clear now. He wanted you to wait till you recognised in him your Guru. You

don't today, evidently; for otherwise you wouldn't have dreamed even of going to another for guidance." He then went on to tell me many things about the forces that acted in and through Yoga, about Guruvada, about the hindrance of mental preconceptions and above all about the greatness of Sri Aurobindo and his endeavour to invoke a Force—the Supramental descent for which our minds and the earth-consciousness were still far from ready. He told me also how he had visioned in his meditations "the great Yogi of this age" (*Yugavatar* was the word he used) and how he had seen also "the Mother" who was at once his disciple and collaborator of identical status. Lastly, he gave me some excellent practical direction as to how I might best profit by Sri Aurobindo's help during my novitiate. I do not remember all that he told me but I will never forget his final warning.

"You have been called," he said. "But remember it is even more difficult to be chosen. For that you will have to surrender your will utterly to your Guru so that he may mould you as *he* will but not as *you* will, mind you. For this you must have faith—a complete faith in his superior wisdom, not only because he is your Guru but also because he has attained the peak of occult powers."

'Yoga-bibhuti' was the word he used.

I was thrilled. For I had never yet come face to face with 'occult powers' and such verifiable powers at that. I was especially impressed by the fact that he had told me the precise advice Sri Aurobindo had given me—a disciple of his, Moni, had communicated this to me in 1924—though I still wondered whether the assurance about Sri Aurobindo's waiting till I was ready for surrender might not, after all, be too good to be true! And last, though by no means least, I was now delivered once and for all from my sense of responsibility which, like a cruel horseman, kept goading me all the time to be more alert in my aspiration. (*Pages* 321-324)

I thought of returning to India but then wouldn't it look too sentimental ? What would my people who thought the world of me infer ? That I was a vacillating milksop, a lackadaisical day-dreamer, at best a well-meaning wayfarer whose one aim was to wander aimlessly through life, a happy parasite, who was a comfort to a handful of similar parasites here and there. It was borne

home to me as never before that I had wilfully accepted the hectic life of ambition, of personal fame as against the one life that matters, the life of a humble servant of the Divine, the one aspiration of the great mystic Mirabai. I felt a pang that I who had heard the Call of the Flute should have thereafter stopped to hark back to lesser music—of fame and personal ambition. (*Page* 328)

I booked a passage home in November, 1927.

But the strange thing was that I still wanted to put off leaving for Pondicherry. I pleaded with my Guru (mentally, I mean) not to tug too hard for yet a while. (*Page* 329)

And I went to Pondicherry for the second time in August, 1928. But I was not a little crestfallen to learn that Sri Aurobindo had in the meanwhile gone into seclusion and made it a rule to see none except on three days in the year and even then he would not speak with them, they could only see him, make him their obeisance and then pass on in a file. But, I heard, the presiding deity of the Ashram 'the Mother', as they called her—had accepted to guide, in consultation with Sri Aurobindo, all who came and I was told that she was a radiant personality adored of all the inmates of the Ashram and looked upon by the disciples as the equal of the great Yogi. So I sought an interview with her after the Darshan day as it was called. She was exceedingly kind to me and listened to me with great sympathy, I was charmed by her personality at once effulgent and soothing. (*Pages* 329-330)

I felt overjoyed but told her, somewhat ruefully, that I had never yet had what is popularly termed "an experience" and that this made me doubt whether Yoga could be utterly convincing to a sceptic like myself. She only smiled and said she would try and told me to meditate in my room at nine in the evening when she would do the same in hers. (*Page* 330)

I was determined to be watchful; in other words, not to accept any experience that might come. I had little use for the credulity of the devout and had a rooted aversion to accept as *authentic* any experience which might be explained away as auto-suggestion,

The thing must be as concrete and indubitable as sense-experience before I could possibly admit it as valid. (*Pages* 330-331)

I am at pains to stress this because what did come was so utterly unexpected as to rule out all auto-suggestion or wishful thinking. At all events, I was convinced that a Force was acting like a ferment within me which was too concrete to be dismissed.

The next day I surrendered to the Mother my will to be moulded by her and Sri Aurobindo. I was accepted and came finally to follow their lead three months later, on the 22nd November, to be more precise, dedicating all I had to what I have learned to love more and more as the holiest cause to which I could possibly consecrate my life. (*Page* 331)

On February 4th 1943

I entered his room, the sanctum from which he had never once stirred out since 1926, and made my obeisance. He blessed me.

"Feeling better?" he asked, his eyes soft with kindness.

"Yes," I answered with some difficulty. I was moved. He bent his starry eyes on me expectantly. But not a word came to my lips. This was unusual with me for I had come equipped with a quiverful of questions. He came to my help and broke the silence, to put me at my ease. "You sent me some questions in writing this morning," he said. "Suppose we start with the first?"

I nodded and hung on his every word...

"As to your first question," he said, "there are, broadly, two ways. One is that of Buddha who held, as you know, that although you may get some help or guidance from others, Guru or not, you will have to tread the Path alone, that is, hewing your way out of the wood with your own effort: in other words, the time-old path of *Tapasya*. The other way is to take the Guru as a Representative of the Divine who knows the Way and therefore is in a position, obviously, to help others in finding it. That is the path followed by the aspirants here, in the Ashram—the path of Guruvad."

I nodded and said: "I know that. But I asked you in one of my questions: what should be one's attitude when one feels oneself held up by certain human limitations of the Guru?"

"But I think I have gone into the question before and said that though something is determined by the power of the channel —that is to say, the Guru—much more is determined by that of the recipient, the disciple." He paused and gave me a half smile as he went on : "you see, the modern mind often makes a mental muddle in such questions for the simple reason that in the way of the Spirit the Force that works things out does not achieve its results on the lines laid down by mental reason. That is why it fails to appreciate this simple fact that once the disciple accepts the Guru as a Representative of the Divine, the Divine too accepts him through the Guru : put differently, when he opens to the Guru he opens to the Divine so that the Guru can, in spite of his 'human limitations' help him by the simple process of invoking a Force that acts through the Guru's personality—a Force which is *not* dwarfed by his human limitations. I wrote to you also once, I think, that the Guru's imperfections need be no stumbling-block to a disciple who may contact the Divine through the Guru even before the Guru himself; so what matters, in the last analysis, is the Guru's *spiritual capacity* to get him the desired contact and not his *human limitations*—because these don't block the way. Do you follow ?"

The next question was about certain occult phenomena like materialisation or levitation. I had had a discussion with a friend to whom he had said, when told of my scepticism, that these were by no means all trickery and humbug as contended by many dogmatic scientists.

"But you needn't be alarmed," he put in placidly. "For Yoga has for its ultimate object the realisation of the Divine and achieving the Divine life. These are side-issues and as such need not be looked upon as germane to spiritual experience. So belief in them is not necessary, far less indispensable for realisation. You have the right of private judgment in matters such as these."

My heart-beat abated, and I said : "I am very much relieved. For I feared lest the inability to accept the Guru's view in every instance be looked upon by the Guru as a sure sign of one's unfitness to profit by the master's guidance."

"You may be reassured once more," he said kindly. "For you can take it from me that when I say or write anything it's only to

state my findings or else explain my point of view. I don't insist on it as a law for others. And can you imagine, knowing me as you do all these years, that I should impose my outlook on others ? I have never cared to be a dictator ; neither do I insist that everybody's view must be moulded by mine, any more than I insist that everybody must follow me or my Yoga." He paused and pointed at a bronze image in front. "For instance" he said, "I find that image very beautiful. But if you disagree why should I mind?"

"But," I hastened to add : "I revere you so much that even to have to differ from you on a small matter causes me a pang. I want my mind to abdicate. But where is the new ruler whom I am to put on its throne".

"It would be easier for the mind to get the new light if it didn't insist as it does that its old Ruler, Reason, was fully capable of coping with the situation. For, boiled down, it comes to an insistence, really, that the mind was the ultimate judge of all experience. But spiritual experience has it that you can never hope to understand—get to the root of—anything by your mind alone. The mind by its very constitution is unable to apprehend more than a very small fraction of the Divine reality and its action. Of this action occult phenomena is an instance in point. You cannot understand the true nature of such phenomena with your mental probings and since this is a fact, it would be better if instead of dismissing them as fraud you could suspend your judgment till you become competent to judge. For this deeeper judgment only comes through the dawn of a greater consciousness by whose light alone can you hope to understand Divine action behind its terrestrial or ocult disguises."

"But—I mean—it's all right in theory," I still demurred, "but when one is actually confronted—for instance, take the case of Sri Bijoy Goswami who said that his Guru had spirited away his wife to a far-off place across the sky. Do you mean to say that it can be authentic or possible ?" "Whether what he claimed did happen in his wife's case is more than I can tell you," he answered. "But since levitation has been *seen* to be possible and can be verified by the Yogis and has been, I don't see how it can be dismissed out of hand as impossible. Thousands of experiences testify to phenomena which utterly baffle the mind. For when all is said and

done, experience is and must be the last touchstone of reality and experience has it that levitation or materialisation is possible."

"There," I interjected, "You have just anticipated me. For I was going to ask you precisely about materialisation. One hears of such occurrences but I have so far met none who has seen these with his own eyes. One must have reliable evidence, you know —not merely hearsay."

He smiled and said : "Let me tell you then what I have seen with my own eyes if only to obviate your objection about the hearsay evidence. And it was an occurrence witnessed to by at least half-a-dozen people besides, who were with me."

"The stone-throwing began unobtrusively with a few stones thrown at the guest-house kitchen—apparently from the terrace opposite, but there was no one there. The phenomenon began at the fall of dusk and continued at first for half-an-hour, but daily it increased in frequency, violence and size of the stones, and the duration of the attack increased also, sometimes lasting for several hours until, towards the end, in the hour or half hour before midnight, it became a regular bombardment ; and now it was no longer at the kitchen only but thrown at other places as well : for example, the outer verandah. At first we took it for a human-made affair and sent for the police, but the investigation lasted only for a short time and when one of the constables in the verandah got a stone whizzing unaccountably between his two legs, the police abandoned the case in a panic. We made our own investigations, but the places whence the stones seemed to be or might be coming were void of human stone-throwers. Finally, as if to put us kindly out of doubt, the stones began falling inside closed rooms ; one of these—it was a huge one and I saw it immediately after it fell—reposed flat and comfortable on a cane table as if that was its proper resting place. And so it went on till the missiles became murderous. Hitherto the stones had been harmless except for a daily battering of Bijoy's door—during the last days—which I watched the night before the end. They appeared in mid-air, a few feet above the ground, not coming from a distance but suddenly manifesting and, from the direction from which they flew, should have been thrown close in from the compound of the guest-house or the verandah itself, but the whole place was in clear light and I saw that there was no hu-

man being there nor could have been. At last the semi-idiot boy servant who was the centre of the attack and was sheltered in Bijoy's room under his protection, began to be severely hit and was bleeding from a wound by stones materialising inside the closed room. I went in at Bijoy's call and saw the last stone fall on the boy: Bijoy and he were sitting side by side and the stone was thrown at them in front but there was no one visible to throw it—the two were alone in the room.

"So far we had been watching or scouting around, but this was a little too much, it was becoming dangerous and something had to be done about it. The Mother, from her knowledge of the process of these things, decided that the process here must depend on a nexus between the boy servant and the house, so if the nexus were broken and the servant separated from the house, the stone-throwing would cease. We sent him away to Hrishikesh's place and immediately the whole phenomenon ceased; not a single stone was thrown after that and peace reigned.

"That showed," Sri Aurobindo wrote in conclusion, "that these occult phenomena are real, have a law or process as definite as that of any scientific operation and that the knowledge of the processes can not only bring them about but put an end to or annul them."

(I must pause here to be able to explain the episode for the general reader. I was told afterwards by Amrita, who had been an eye-witness of the whole drama, that all this had happened in mid-winter in 1921 day after day. And fortunately, he had kept a record of the whole incident which he showed me. From this I gathered that a cook called Vattal was the author of the mischief. Infuriated for having been dismissed, the fellow had threatened that he would make the place too hot for those who remained. And he went for help to a Mussalman Faqir who was versed in black magic, and then it all began. I asked Amrita whether the stones could have been illusory. He smiled and said he had had them collected and kept them as exibits for months and that they had a very curious feature in that they were all covered with moss. I was also told that among those who were then on the spot there was the rationalist stalwart Upendra Nath Banerji who had at first pooh-poohed the black-magic story and girded up his loins

to unearth the miscreants who were responsible for it all. But even he had to confess himself beaten in the end as he could not make any sense out of the strange episode. But it all transpired when Vattal's wife came in an extremity of despair and threw herself at the mercy of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Her husband had realised that the nemesis had overtaken him for he knew occultism enough to realise that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had hurled the force back. When such occult forces are aroused against one who can repel them they inevitably recoil back upon the head of its original author. So her husband had fallen desperately sick. Sri Aurobindo in his generosity forgave the fellow and said in Amrita's presence: "For this he need not die." The black magician recovered after that.)

"So you see," he said, at the end of his narration, "the Mother who had studied occultism in North Africa could understand it all because of her deep occult knowledge."

"And you ?"

He smiled but deliberated for a split second before he answered: "I too have had hundreds of personal experiences about occult forces."

"What about the question of levitation ?"

"I take levitation as an acceptable idea, because I have had experience of the natural energies which, if developed, would bring it about and also physical experiences which would not have been possible if the principle of levitation were untrue."

"But why is it then," I asked after a slight pause, "that the modern mind is so definitely against accepting such experiences as valid ?"

"I have answered that question in my various writings," he answered, "and have said there that the mind is an instrument of Ignorance growing towards knowledge. This does not mean that mind has no place at all in the spiritual life; but it does mean that it cannot be even the main instrument much less the authority to whose judgment all must submit themselves including the Divine." (*Pages* 331-340)

"The popular notion that you can judge what is beyond the ordinary consciousness when you are still in the ordinary con-

sciousness is untenable. So the best way is to make your mind as passive as you can and open to the Truth delivered from these preconceptions. The thing is to grow in consciousness as to be able to realise the higher truths. If you can do that and let your psychic being take the lead, it will, in due time, lead you to the opening you seek where the mind with its half-lit consciousness will no longer circumscribe your vision because a higher Light, descending from above," he pointed at a region above his head, "will then take its place and knowledge will pour in from the higher reaches of the mind up to Overmind and Supermind. That is my Yoga, as you know." I nodded without enthusiasm. "I know," I answered, "and I see, too, that 'mental passivity' is likely to be helpful if one can but achieve it. But my difficulty is that my mind is too refractory to abdicate obligingly. "And then," I hesitated for a split second and added: "the difficulty is by no means lessened when I catch myself wondering...whether mental questioning too may not have some use... serving some purpose! At such moments I would ask myself if...if even our doubts too might not be helpful through the very suffering they entailed." (*Page* 342)

"As for doubts, I don't think mere doubts can bring any gain; mental questioning can bring gains if it is in pursuit of truth, but questioning just for the sake of sceptical questioning or in a pure spirit of contradiction can only bring, when it is directed against the truths of the spirit, either error or a lasting incertitude. If I am always questioning the Light when it comes and refusing its offer of truth, the Light cannot stay in me, cannot settle; eventually finding no welcome and no foundation in the mind, it will retire. One must push forward into the Light and not be always falling back into the darkness and hugging the darkness in the delusion that it is the real light. Whatever fulfilment one may feel in pain and misery and doubt belongs to Ignorance: the real fulfilment is in the Divine joy and the Divine truth and its certitude and it is that for which the Yogin strives. In the struggle he may have to pass through doubt, not by his own choice or will but because there is still imperfection in his knowledge."

The next question I asked was whether mental evolution might not on occasion hinder the psychic evolution.

"It may and very often does," he answered, "especially if the attitude is wrong; that is, if the mind presumes that it is the last term of our personality. The reason I have told you before. It is that the higher Light which comes to expedite the evolution invites our co-operation. Consequently if the pride of the mind and vital in the surface mental ideas declines to make room for it it cannot effect an entry. That is why I have told you more than once, I think, that in the realm of the Spirit it is only when one knows that one is ignorant that one really begins to know. For so long as one is unwilling to go beyond the mind one is unlikely to have any but the vaguest ideas of the higher functions of the consciousness. For instance, men who live and are content to live in the mental regard themselves generally as physical beings or beings of life or mental beings without feeling any urge to posit a soul. For they don't feel it except perhaps in the hope that it is something which survives the dissolution of the body. But beyond this they are not prepared to go for the simple reason that they have not experienced the soul as distinct from the mind. "So these," he added, "identify themselves with their mental beings and assert that the soul is a fiction because they don't feel they have any soul. And this happens so long as the psychic being remains still veiled—behind." (*Pages* 344-345)

I nodded somewhat sadly and answered : "But it is one thing to understand but quite another to do the bidding of the understanding. What I mean is that though I see the wisdom of getting the mind to help, yet I find it enormously difficult to achieve the plasticity you advocate. So why not give me some practical hints as to how I am to set about it ?"

"Didn't I advise you in so many of my letters to get into contact with your inner being, to try to live within, to take the help of your poetry and music, for instance, because these promote your devotion —*bhakti*—and help you take up the right attitude. I have told you —and you have known this too—how much easier it becomes to tread the psychic path, the sunlit path, when one's attitude is right, since it becomes then ever so much easier for the psychic being to come to the front. And I have told you also, so many times, that the more your psychic being comes to the fore, the less difficult

will become the task of transformation of the human nature into its divine absolute. That is why I have always enjoined on you to follow this path—the path of devotion, service and work—since it is easier for your nature to follow this path than any other."

"I follow all that intellectually, you may be sure," I answered ruefully. "Only—well, I find this path anything but easy, as I too have told you again and again. My mental and vital self-will simply keeps butting in and spoiling all and there I find myself in a quandary taking always the wrong view of things." (*Pages* 346-347)

"The thing is—I mean I simply can't retain the—the psychic attitude. Why can't I ?"

"I can answer that. It's because your vital gets restless through impatience and then your mental starts fidgeting and questioning —didn't I tell you all that before ?" (*Page* 348)

"But what about the way of knowledge to quieten the mind ?"

"Well, there are several approved techniques—for those, I mean who are called to tread the path. The one Vivekananda followed, for instance. "The first lesson, then, is to sit for some time and let the mind run on. The mind is bubbling up all the time. It is like a monkey jumping about. Let the monkey jump as much as he can; you simply wait and watch....Until you know what the mind is doing you can't control it. Give it rein....You will find that each day it is becoming calmer...until at last the mind will be under perfect control".

"Well, that is one way of achieving mastery over your thoughts," Sri Aurobindo said after explaining the process. "There are others. Lele, for instance, showed me one. 'Make your mind quiet,' he told me, 'don't think actively. Then you will see that the thoughts you believe to be yours come from outside; throw them away as they come and your mind will fall silent.' I had never heard of such a thing before. But I did not question the possibility nor doubt the truth of it. I accepted what he told me and made my mind inactive, only watching what thoughts were coming and whence. Then I saw a wonderful thing : the mind as a whole silent and single thoughts coming, indeed, from outside ! And I threw these away before they could enter the aura of my mind. Thus in three

days I was free from all thoughts and my mental became universal and liberated, and I became the master of the incoming thoughts and no longer their puppet, since I could choose the ones I would and reject the rest." (*Pages* 349-350)

"But I do try," I returned, "through my music and poetry as you put it specifically, and you know very well too how hard I have worked on those lines. But the difficulty is—and it is a growing one, I fear—that these activities satisfy me no longer, as I wrote to you so many times in the past. For do what I will, I simply can't get rid of a feeling that such activities are—how shall put it—well, pointless, in the last analysis, like games you don't enjoy and yet you have to pretend you do."

"I know," he answered after a thoughtful pause, "it is the old trend of *vairāgya* which has taken root somewhere in your nature." He paused and looked at me fixedly as he added: "Personally, I do not care for *vairāgya* as you know. I have always preferred the way of *samatā*—equality—of the Gita, in which one is not attached to or bound by anything."

"And yet", I added, "the curious and somewhat embarrassing part of it is that others seem to feel that I am a radiant crystal of joy and faith and strength even when I am, in dull earnest, just sad and weak and lonely. How is that?"

"That's simple enough," he said, "They only come in contact with your inner being in which these are sparkling all right. (*Pages* 351-352)

He seemed to read my thoughts. For he said: "Such things do happen in the spiritual field—things which the mind finds difficult to conceive. I will give you an instance. It is a fact of spiritual experience that the Guru may even be less than the disciple and yet able to help; he may even be instrumental in imparting to his disciple what he never himself realised." (*Page* 354)

"Well", I apologised a little abashed, "I didn't exactly doubt your word, only I wondered—how shall I put it—I mean I asked myself whether it was a concrete Force you had meant when you speak about it."

"Concrete ? What do you mean by 'concrete' ? Spiritual Force has its own concreteness. It can take a form—like a stream for instance—of which one is aware and can send it quite concretely on whatever object one chooses. This is a statement of fact about the power inherent in spiritual consciousness. But there is also such a thing as a willed use of any subtle force—it may be spiritual, mental or vital—to secure a particular result at some point in the world. Just as there are waves of unseen physical forces (cosmic waves etc.) or currents of electricity, so there are mind-waves, thought-currents, waves of emotion—for example, anger, sorrow etc.—which go out and affect others without their knowing whence they come or that they come at all, they only feel the result. One who has the occult or the inner senses awake can feel them coming and invading him. Influences good or bad may propagate themselves in that way; that can happen without intention and naturally, but also a deliberate use can be made of them. There can also be a purposeful generation of force, spiritual or other. There can be too the use of the effective will or idea acting directly witout the aid of any outward action, speech or other instrumentation which is not concrete in that sense, but is all the same effective. These things are not imaginations or delusions or humbug, but true phenomena."

As he warmed up his face looked more radiant than ever and I felt a thrill coursing through my spine. And, in a moment, I caught the contagion of his power and felt as though I had been transformed into a being of certitude ! The darkness of doubt now seemed, suddenly, so alien ! But above all that wonder and exaltation, above the incredible intoxication of drinking in his words face to face there was a feeling of awe that such an incarnation of power and wisdom should be talking to me face to face as a friend ! But I felt no pride, only a deep humility, which is shy to the point of declining an invitation, that such a being made of the stuff of Light and Love should have given me the right to laugh with him, to exchange views—even to break a lance with him as a comrade might !

A lull intervened and I wondered what was coming next. But he said nothing. I met his eyes and then looked away. Still he did not speak. I then made a strange move which I can't explain. I blurted out a pointblank question apropos of nothing at all. I darted

a glance at him and said : "When are you going to come out ?"

He smiled and answered : "I don't know."

"How do you mean ? Surely you must be knowing ?"

He laughed. "Not in the way you know," he said looking intently at me.

He paused for a split second, then added, tantalisingly : "For I stand no longer on the mental plane. I do not decide from the mind."

"But still," I insisted, "You can't really mean to say that a radiant personality like you will be cooped up in this small room till the—the end of time ?"

"But I told you things are not predetermined with me," he said in an unruffled voice. "Suffice to say for the present that I can't do what I have to do if I go on seeing people etc." (*Pages* 354-356)

"I have explained to you partly, in my recent letters, what I am busy with," he added after a slight pause. "But you can well imagine there are many other kinds of resistance I have to overcome." (*Page* 357)

He had written in a letter : "I know and I have experienced hundreds of times that beyond the blackest darkness there lies for one who is a divine instrument the light of God's victory."

20-10-1946

"Have you any direct evidence in favour of such a prognosis ?" I asked again.

A half smile edged his lips. He held my eyes for a few seconds without replying, then said : "I have".

"Do I understand that your Supramental means business after all—I mean, by coming down at long last for us humans ?"

His smile now broadened into laughter. "Yes," he parried, "only tell them when you meet them that the business is not theirs." (*Page* 358)

"Do I understand," I pursued again after the laughter had subsided, "that the conquest of the Asuric forces will usher in the Supramental Descent ? "

"Not in itself," he said with a far-away look, "but it will create conditions for the Descent to become a possibility."

There was something in his tone and look which stirred a chord deep down in me. I hesitated for a little and then hazarded the question, just to have the answer from his lips, was it ? I do not know. All I know is that something irresistible impelled me to it.

"Is your real work this invocation of the Supramental ?"

"Yes", he replied, very simply. "I have come for that." And I was laughing with him, arguing with him, examining his point of view...because he had given me the right by calling me "a friend and a son," in his infinite compassion ! The remorse of Arjuna in the Gita recurred to me, inevitably:

> Oft I addressed thee as a human mate
> And laughed with thee—failing to apprehend
> Thine infinite greatness, sharing with thee my seat
> Or couch—by right of love for thee as a friend :
> For all such errors of irreverence
> Thy forgiveness I implore in penitence. (*Page* 359)

III

*Lecture in Baroda College**

The Address Delivered by Professor Ghose at the College Social Gathering

"In addressing you on an occasion like the present, it is inevitable that the mind should dwell on one feature of this gathering above all others. Held as it is towards the close of the year, I am inevitably reminded that many of its prominent members are with us for the last time in their college life, and I am led to speculate with both hope and anxiety on their future careers, and this not only because several familiar faces are to disappear from us and scatter into different parts of the country and various walks of life, but also

* The Baroda College Miscellany—Vol. V, No. 11—September 1899, pp. 28–33.

because they go out from us as our finished work, and it is by their character and life that our efforts will be judged. When I say, our efforts, I allude not merely to the professorial work of teaching, not to book-learning only, but to the entire activity of the college as a great and complex educational force, which is not solely meant to impart information, but to bring out or give opportunities for bringing out all the various intellectual and other energies which go to make up a man. And here is the side of collegiate institutions of which this Social Gathering especially reminds us, the force of the social life it provides in moulding the character and the mind. I think it will not be out of place, if in dwelling on this I revert to the great Universities of Oxford and Cambridge which are our famous exemplars, and point out a few differences between those Universities and our own and the thoughts those differences may well suggest.

I think there is no student of Oxford or Cambridge who does not look back in after days on the few years of his undergraduate life as, of all the scenes he has moved in, that which calls up the happiest memories, and it is not surprising that this should be so, when we remember what that life must have meant to him. He goes up from the restricted life of his home and school and finds himself in surroundings which with astonishing rapidity expand his intellect, strengthen his character, develop his social faculties, force out all his abilities and turn him in three years from a boy into a man. His mind ripens in the contact with minds which meet from all parts of the country and have been brought up in many various kinds of trainings, his unwholesome eccentricities wear away and the unsocial, egoistic elements of character are to a large extent discouraged. He moves among ancient and venerable buildings, the mere age and beauty of which are in themselves an education. He has the Union which has trained so many great orators and debaters, has been the first trial ground of so many renowned intellects. He has, too, the athletics clubs organized with a perfection unparalled elsewhere, in which, if he has the physique and the desire for them he may find pursuits which are also in themselves an education. The result is that he who entered the university a raw student, comes out of it a man and a gentleman, accustomed to think of great affairs and fit to move in cultivated society, and

he remembers his College and University with affection, and in after days if he meets with those who have studied with him he feels attracted towards them as to men with whom he has a natural brotherhood. This is the social effect I should like the Colleges and Universities of India also to exercise, to educate by social influences as well as those which are merely academical and to create the feeling among their pupils that they belong to the community, that they are children of one mother. There are many obstacles to this result in the circumstances of Indian Universities. The Colleges are not collected in one town but are scattered among many and cannot assemble within themselves so large and various a life. They are new also, the creation of not more than fifty years—and fifty years is a short period in the life of a University. But so far as circumstances allow, there is an attempt to fill up the deficiency, in your Union, your Debating Club and Reading Room, your athletic sports and Social Gathering. For the success of this attempt time is needed, but your efforts are also needed: and I ask you who are soon to go out into the world, not to forget your College or regard it as a mere episode in your life, but rather as one to whose care you must look back and recompense it by your future life and work, and if you meet fellow-students, alumni of the same College, to meet them as friends, as brothers.

There is another point in which a wide difference exists. What makes Oxford and Cambridge not local institutions but great and historic Universities ? It is the number of great and famous men, of brilliant intellects in every department which have issued from them. I should like you to think seriously of this aspect of the question also. In England the student feels a pride in his own University and College, wishes to see their traditions maintained, and tries to justify them to the world by his own success. This feeling has yet to grow up among us. And I would appeal to you—who are leaving us to help to create it, to cherish it yourselves, to try and justify the College of its pupils. Of course, there is one preliminary method by which the students can add fame to their College. Success in examinations, though preliminary merely, and not an end in itself, is nevertheless of no small effect or importance. You all know how the recent success of an Indian student has filled the whole country with joy and enthusiasm. That success reflects fame

not only on India but on his University and College, and when the name of the first Indian Senior Wrangler is mentioned, it will also be remembered that he belonged to Cambridge and to St. Johns. But examinations, however important, are only a preliminary. I lay stress upon this because there is too much of a tendency in this country to regard education as a mere episode, finished when once the degree is obtained. But the University cannot and does not pretend to complete a man's education; it merely gives some materials to his hand or points out certain paths he may tread, and it says to him,—"Here are the materials I have given into your hands, it is for you to make of them what you can;" or—"These are the paths I have equipped you to travel; it is yours to tread them to the end, and by your success in them justify me before the world."

I would ask you therefore to remember these things in your future life, not to drop the effects of your College training as no longer necessary, but, to strive for eminence and greatness in your own lines, and by the brilliance of your names add lustre to the first nursing home of your capacities, to cherish its memory with affection as that which equipped your intellects, trained you into men, and strove to give you such social life as might fit you for the world. And finally I would ask you not to sever yourselves in after days from it, but if you are far, to welcome its alumni when you meet them with brotherly feelings and if you are near to keep up connection with it, not to regard the difference of age between yourselves and its future students but associate with them, be present at such occasions as this social gathering and evince by your acts your gratitude for all that it did for you in the past."

IV

Note on Birth-place

It is also known that Sri Aurobindo was born in the very house of Barrister Manomohan Ghose on the 15th of August in the year 1872. Some say that the house was situated in the Lower Circular Road, others say—in the Theatre Road. Sri Aurobindo used to

mention the house of the Theatre Road. On enquiry we find there is no mention of the name of Barrister Manomohan Ghose in the old directory, as a resident of any house of the Theatre Road during the period from 1871 to 1878—but mention is made of him as resident of No. 12 Lower Circular Road. At that time the Circular Road was divided not only in two sections, upper and lower, but the house numbers of that road were also divided in these two sections "Town side" and "24 Parganas Side". That is to say the portion adjacent to the city of Calcutta was known as "Town side" and the numbers were alloted as 1, 2, etc. and the southern and eastern portion was known as "24 Parganas side" and the numbers were alloted as 1, 2, etc, Barrister Manomohan Ghose used to live in the same number 12 in the 24 Parganas side. It is said also that this house was later on purchased by Byomokesh Chakrabarty and afterwards it was turned into the "Ranjani" of Nalini Ranjan Sarkar.

Sajanikanta Das
Sanivarer Chithi
Jan., Feb.—1955

V

Houses in Calcutta occupied by Sri Aurobindo

Houses Sri Aurobindo lived in and the offices with which he was connected :—

1. 12 Wellington Street, Subodh Mallick's house.
2. No. 23 Scott's Lane.
3. Bhopal Chandra Bose's house in Serpentine Lane.
4. Alipore jail—Solitary cell.
5. 48 Grey Street (1st floor)
6. Sanjivani Office (after May 1909)
7. No. 8 College Square. Krishna Kumar Mitter's Place (From Nov. 1909 to Feb 1910)
8. No. 4 Shyam Pukur Lane "Karma Yogin Office."

VI

Bibliography of books of Sri Aurobindo Published in English

(Years ago I had attempted to collect information about books published by Sri Aurobindo in all the languages. That has remained incomplete. This list compiled by M. Monod-Herzen is inserted here):

1893-94

On his return to India—in 1893—Sri Aurobindo wrote two series of articles in the *Induprakash* of Bombay:

1. *New lamps for old*

2. *Bankim Chandra Chatterjee*, the first was a series of nine and the second of seven articles. They were published from 7 August to 6 March 1894; and from 16 July to 27 August 1894 respectively.

1895

Songs to Myrtilla and other poems. 1st edition: Laxmi Vilas Printing Press, Baroda; for private circulation.

2nd edition appeared in 1909 of which an annoucement was made in the *Karmayogin* No. 8, 1909. It was reprinted in 1923 by the Arya Publishing House, College Street, Calcutta. It is now incorporated in his *Collected Poems and Plays* published in 1942.

1896 (?)

Urvasie (a poem), 1st edition: the same agency as No I "for private circulation". It was republished in Bombay by Caxton Works, date unascertained; then in 1909 with No I with an annoucement in the *Karmayogin* No. 12, 1909. It now forms part of the *Collected Poems and Plays* published in 1942.

1906-1910

Publication of *Bande Mataram* paper and *The Karmayogin*. The first one commenced publication up to September, 1908; the second began from 27 June 1909 to 2nd April 1910,

1908

Two lectures of Srijut Aravinda Ghose, B.A. (Cantab.)

1. *Advice to National College students.*

2. *The Present Situation.*

1st edition by G.P. Murdeshwar, B.A., Bombay, 1908, Bombay National Union Series No. I. These are now included in the *Speeches.*

1909

The open letter to his countrymen. 1st edition Manomohan Ghose, Sri Narayan Press, Calcutta 1909. Reprint of an article in the "*Karmayogin,*" 1909—No. 6;

This year *Dharma*, a Bengali weekly, was brought out by Sri Aurobindo.

1910

Sri Aurobindo came to stay at Pondicherry: He wrote an article in the *Bharati* in Bengali and another one in *Suprabhat* published from Pondicherry. These two were together published in the form of a book entitled *Kara Kahini.* It was published in 1922 by the Pravartak Publishing House, Chandernagore.

1911

Vikramorvasie or *The Hero and the Nymph*—a drama by Kalidasa, 1st edition, R. Chatterjee. Kuntaline Press, Calcutta, 1911. Re-published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry after some retouching.

1914-1921

Publication of the *Arya*: From August 15th, 1914 to January 1921: It was the "grand synthesis" of knowledge achieved by Sri Aurobindo that was the main subject of the *Arya.* In it appeared serially all the major works which were later published in book form.

1915

Ahana and Other Poems: 1st edition: The Modern Press, Pondicherry. 25 poems were published in this edition. They were included in the *Collected Poems and Plays* later on.

Before 1919

The Ideal of the Karmayogin: 1st edition is not traceable; It was reprinted several times at Chandernagore and Calcutta. The twelve articles included in it were originally written in the *Karmayogin* in 1909-1910 (No. 1 to 38). The last two articles in it are by Sister Nivedita.

1919

The Uttarpara Speech: 1st edition published by Pravartak Publishing House, Chandernagore. August, 1919.

It is a reprint of the speech given at Uttarpara and which appeared in the *Karmayogin* No. 1 & 2, 1909.

Katha Upanishad, 1st edition by Ashteker & Co. Poona. It was a reprint from the *Karmayogin* No 3, & 6 to 10 in which it originally appeared in 1909.

The Ideal of Human Unity: 1st edition by Sons of India Ltd., British India Press, Madras, 1919. It was a reprint of the text that appeared in the *Arya* from September 1915 to July 1918. This publication had a summary and 3 appendices:

1. *Arya*'s second year (July 1915). 2. *Our Ideal*, August. 1918. The *Arya*'s fourth year (July 1918).

Second edition was published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry in 1950. This time the text was revised by Sri Aurobindo. A new chapter was added as a postscript.

American edition with an index published by The Sri Aurobindo Library Inc, New York, 1950; The new chapter was printed in this book as an introduction.

1920

The Seven Upanishads: 1st edition; Ashtekar & Co Poona, 1920, containing Marathi translation of Sri Aurobindo's English rendering of Isha, Kena, Mundaka, as it had originally appeared in the *Karmayogin*, Vol. I, No. 1, June 1909, No. 2 July, 1909, and No. 31, 32 and 34 in 1910.

Dayananda—the man and his work together with Dayananda and the Veda. 1st edition: Gurukul Vishwavidyalaya, Gurukul Press, Kangri, 1920. It was a reprint of his article in the Vedic Magazine. Subsequently it was included in the book entitled: *Bankim*,

Tilak, Dayananda—published in 1940. *The Renaissance in India.* 1st edition printed by Pravartak Publishing House, Chandernagore, 1920. This book contained four articles that had appeared in the Arya Vol. V, No 1 to 4, in 1918. The articles were suggested by a book of Mr. James Cousins.

Ideals and Progress—Essays. 1st edition by Arya Publishing House, Calcutta, 1920. It contained five articles that appeared in the Arya (with an omission of the first paragraph of the last article). No. 11, No. 12, No. 10, No. 12, (No. 1, 1915). Subsequent editions were revised.

The Superman—1st edition 1920; it contains three articles of the Arya 1915. The type of Superman (No. 9; All-will and Free-will, No. 8; The Delight of Works, No. 1.)

Evolution—1st edition 1920, containing three articles from the Arya (1915): No. 1, No. 2, No. 3. *Thoughts and Glimpses*: 1st edition 1920. Containing articles from the Arya grouped into sections. Aphorisms with goal (1915, No. 8); The delight of being, Man, the Purusha, the End, No. 10; The chain No. 11, and *Thoughts and Glimpses* (1917 No. 1);

Second edition in 1923 revise .

War and Self-determination—1st edition, S. R. Murthy & Co., Madras 1920, with an introduction to three articles of the Arya: *The Passing of War*, Vol. II, 1916 No. 9; *The Unseen Power*, 1918, No. 5; *Self-determination*, 1918. No. 2; and *The League of Nations. Letters of Sri Aurobindo to Mrinalini Devi*—his wife—Original in Bengali seized by the Police and produced in Court as evidence; the only available edition seems the third one—published by Pravartak Publishing House, Chandernagore, in 1920; with the title "*Sri Aurobinder Patra.*" It was followed by another letter to Barindra Kumar Ghose entitled *Pondicherir Patra* originally written on 7th April, 1920.

1921

Isha Upanishad—1st edition, Arya Publishing House, Calcutta, 1921 Sanskrit text, translation, analysis and commentary: Reprint of articles that appeared in the Arya 1915, No 1 to 10.

The Yoga and its Objects—1st edition, Pravartak Publishing House, Chandernagore, 1921

Love and Death—1st edition, Miss Mrinalini Chattopadhyay, at Vasant Press, Adyar, Madras 1921. Reprinted from the quarterly Shama, Vol. 1. No. 4, 1921.

A System of National Education—1st edition, Tagore and Co, Madras, 1921. Reprint of eight articles from the *Karmayogin*, Vol. 1. 1910 No. 32 to 39. Subsequent editions printed with minor changes.

Kalidasa's Seasons—1st edition, Tagore & Co, Madras, 1921. Reprint of three articles from the *Karmayogin*, 1909, Vol. I, No. 6 to 8.

The Age of Kalidasa—1st edition, Tagore & Co, Madras, 1921.

Calcutta Review—These essays and the preceding were combined in a book entitled *Kalidasa* in 1929 at Calcutta—Arya Sahitya Bhavan.

The Brain of India—1st edition: Pravartak Publishing House, Chandernagore, 1921.

Reprint of four articles from the *Karmayogin* 1909, Vol. I. No. 16 to 19.

1922

Man, Slave or Free ? 1st edition, Pravartak Publishing House, Chandernagore 1922. Reprint of five articles from the *Karmayogin*; for private circulation. 1909, No. 2; 1909, No. 3; 1909, No. 4; 1910, No. 30; 1910, No. 34.

Baji Prabhu—1st edition, Arya Office, Pondicherry, 1922. Reprint from the *Karmayogin*, 1910, No. 33-35. Text revised.

Essays on the Gita—1st edition, Ramaswamy Shashtrulu & Sons, Madras, 1922; Reprint of the first chapters that appeared under the same title in the *Arya*, Vol. III & IV from August 1916 to July 1918.

2nd edition, Arya Publishing House, Calcutta, 1926, with the title *Essays on the Gita, First Series*.

Essays on the Gita,—Second series, 1st edition published: Arya Publishing House, Calcutta, in 1928. Reprinted from the *Arya* Vol. V & VI—from August 1918 to July 1920.

Text was revised at the time of second edition in 1942, April. American edition of the same: with Glossary and Index: by The Sri Aurobindo Library, New York, 1950.

The National Value of Art.—1st edition, Pravartak Publishing House, Chandernagore 1922. Reprint of articles from the *Karmayogin* 1909, No. 20 to 25;

2nd edition, Arya Publishing House, Calcutta, 1935; text revised.

Speeches of Sri Aurobindo—1st edition, September 1922, in two parts—one volume: The first part contains speeches that had appeared in the *Bande Mataram*—except two—sometimes the heading of the original was different.

1. *The Present Situation* 1908, No. 38.

2. United Congress 1908. No. 46 (a public meeting at Panti's Math)

3. Baruipur speech.

4. Palli Samiti 1908 No. 48; (Sri Aurobindo at Kishoregunj); the second part contains speeches that appeared in the *Karmayogin* in 1909 with *Uttarpara Speech*—published separately in 1919—as the first—followed by 2. Beadon Square speech (No. 1—A Swadeshi meeting—Sri Aurobindo's speech) 3. Jhalakati speech—*Karmayogin* No. 3; 4. The right of association K. No. 4, 6 & 7; 5. College Square speech, K. No. 5 (Meeting in College Square) 6. Kumartuli Speech K. No. 8 (Sri Aurobindo's speech—Kumartuli meeting) Republished in 1948 at Pondicherry.

In the same year—1922—was published *Kara Kahini—The story of prison life*—in Bengali by the Pravartak Publishing House, Chandernagore.

1923

Rishi Bankim Chandra—1st edition: Pravartak Publishing House, Chandernagore 1923. Containing two translations—in prose and in verse—of the National song *Vande Mataram*, with a note that appeared originally in the *Karmayogin* 1909; No. 20; it also contained a poem on Bankim which had appeared already in *Songs to Myrtilla.*

The Need of Nationalism and other Essays—1st edition, S. Ganeshan Madras 1923. Reprint of five articles that appeared in the *Karmayogin* 1909. 1. *The Need of Nationalism* No. 1; title: *Ourselves*, 2. *The Power that Uplifts*, No. 9; and three other articles—*Man, Slave or Free?*, *Fate and Free Will*, *The Principle of Evil* which had already appeared in the booklet *Man, Slave or Free?*" in 1922.

Songs of the Sea—Sagar Sangit; 1st edition: Ganesh & Co., Madras, 1923; Translation of C.R. Das's original Bengali poems into English verse by Sri Aurobindo.

1924

The Century of Life—1st edition: The Shama's Publishing House, Madras, 1924. Some of the epigrams of Bhartruhari that had appeared in the *Karmayogin* 1910, No. 37, and in the *Arya* 1917, No. 5 and in 1918, No. 4.

1928

The Mother—1st edition, Arya Sahitya Bhavan, Calcutta. 1928

1929

Kalidasa—1st edition, Arya Sahitya Bhavan, Rameshwar De, Calcutta, 1929. It contains the two writings: 1. *Age of Kalidasa* and 2. *Kalidasa's Seasons.*

1933

The Riddle of this World—1st edition, Arya Publishing House, Calcutta, 1933. Written in reply to certain questions.

1934

The Teaching and Ashram of Sri Aurobindo—1st edition (Bharathy Press Pondicherry) Ashram. Reprinted in 1948 as second part to *Sri Aurobindo and his Ashram.*

1935

Six Poems—1st edition, Rameshwar & Co, Chanderanagore, with translation in Bengali. At the end notes from the author's letters are added.

Lights on Yoga—1st edition, Sri Aurobindo Library, Howrah, 1935. Extracts from letters to disciples.

Second edition appeared in 1942 with Glossary of Sanskrit terms.

1936

Bases of Yoga—1st edition, Arya Publishing House, Calcutta. Extracts from letters to disciples.

1937

Sri Aurobindo—a Life Sketch, 1st edition, Arya Publishing House, Calcutta, 1937. Recast, to be included as the first part of *Sri Aurobindo and his Ashram* which appeared in 1948.

1930-40

The Life Divine—2 Volumes in 3 parts, 1st edition, Arya Publishing House, Calcutta (Vol. I, 1939. Vol. II, 1940)

Vol. I, *Pages* 441. Reprint of the first twenty seven chapters which appeared in the *Arya* from August 1914 to October 1916: The "arguments" in the original writings have been omitted. Some paragraphs have been added—P. 343-352—A new chapter, 28th, is added.

Vol II, *Pages* 515. Reprint from the last chapter that appeared in the *Arya*. The order of the chapters is altered considerably. Chapters I, II, VI, X, XIX, XXIV, XXV, XXVI and XXVIII are entirely new.

American edition : in one volume with an index: Sri Aurobindo Library, New York—1949. 1040 pages.

Bankim—Tilak—Dayananda—1st edition: Arya Publishing House, Calcutta 1940. Reprint of five articles: The first two, *Bande Mataram* and *Rishi Bankim Chandra* were already published; the third was written as a preface to Balgangadhar Tilak by Ganesh & Co., Madras 1918; Dayananda had appeared in the Vedic Magazine; *The Man that Passed* was written on the death of R. C. Dutt in the *Karmayogin*, 1909, No. 22.

1941

Heraclitus—1st edition, Arya Publishing House, Calcutta, 1941. Reprint of seven articles on Heraclitus that appeared in the *Arya* Vol. III No. 5 to 11 from December 1916 to June 1917. Suggested by the book on philosophy of Heraclitus by Prof. R. D. Ranade.

Views and Reviews—1st edition, Sri Aurobindo Library, Madras 1941. Reprint of articles from the *Arya* : four articles of the first part were taken from Vol. I No. 1 to 3 and 6; the five articles of the second part from Vol. I No. 10, Vol. II. No. 3, Vol. III No.12, Vol. IV No. 4. Vol. VI No. 9,

Poems—1st edition: Government Central Press, Hydrabad, 1941. The three first sonnets were published in the *Calcutta Review*, Vol. 53, No. 1, 1934; for private circulation only.

1942

Collected Poems and Plays—Two volumes. 1st edition, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. Poetry and Drama,—complete works with two appendices : Essay on quantitative metre and a bibliography.

1944

On the War, 1st edition : Arya Publishing House, Calcutta. *Letters of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother*. Later these were incorporated in *Messages of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother*, 2nd edition.

1946

Poems, Past and Present—1st edition, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1946. Three of the poems were printed in the *Advent*, February and April 1946, the third one in *Sri Aurobindo Circle* No. 2, 1946.

Hymns to the Mystic Fire—1st edition, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Pondicherry 1946. With a foreword and the doctrine of the mystics —already printed in the *Arya* Vol. II. p. 112-115; second edition : with very large number of hymns added in 1952.

1947

Letters of Sri Aurobindo—1st edition : *Sri Aurobindo Circle*, Bombay, 1947. Extracts from letters to disciples

The Significance of Indian Art—1st edition, Sri Aurobindo Circle, Bombay 1947. Reprint of chapters XII to XV of *A Defence of Indian Culture* that appeared in the *Arya*, Vol. VI pp. 350 to 561.

The Spirit and Form of Indian Polity—1st edition, Arya Publishing House, Calcutta 1947. Reprint of the chapters XX to XXIII of *A Defence of Indian Culture* that appeared in the *Arya*, Vol. VII. p. 166 to 340.

1948

More Lights on Yoga—1st edition, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1948. Extracts from letters to disciples.

Sri Aurobindo and His Ashram—1st edition, Arya Publishing House, Calcutta, 1948. Reprint,—much enlarged. *Sri Aurobindo, A Life Sketch*, and *Teaching and the Ashram of Sri Aurobindo. The Synthesis of Yoga* Part I—The Yoga of Divine Works—1st edition, Sri Aurobindo Library, Madras, 1948. Reprint, very much enlarged, of first twelve chapters from the *Arya* from January 1915 to November 1915.

American edition, with glossary and index, by Sri Aurobindo Library, New York, 1950.

The Doctrine of Passive Resistance—1st edition, Arya Publishing House, Calcutta, 1948. Reprint of articles that appeared in the *Bande Mataram* in 1907, from 9 to 23 April.

1949

Letters of Sri Aurobindo—2nd series, 1st edition, Sri Aurobindo Circle, Bombay 1949. Extracts from letters to disciples.

After the War—1st edition, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1949. Reprint of articles that appeared in the *Arya* in August 1920.

The Human Cycle—1st edition, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1949. Reprint of the chapters that appeared in the *Arya* from August 1916 to July 1918; under the title: *The Psychology of Social Development*.

American edition, with an index by Sri Aurobindo Library, New York, 1950.

Letters of Sri Aurobindo—Third Series—1st edition, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1949.

Chitrangada—a fragment—1st edition, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1949.

1950

Savitri—A Legend and a Symbol : Part One. First part containing Books I to III with a facsimile of a page in the author's handwriting.

It was published in fragments since 1947, by Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1950.

Thoughts from Sri Aurobindo—First Series. 1st edition, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1950. Extracts from writings on different subjects.

1951

Savitri—A Legend and a Symbol—Parts II & III, Books IV to XII. Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1951.

Letters of Sri Aurobindo—Fourth Series, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1951.

Letters of Sri Aurobindo on Savitri,—Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1951.

Conversations of the Dead—Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, written in 1909 and 1910 for the *Karmayogin*.

Science and Culture—Selected extracts. Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1951.

1952

The Problem of Rebirth—Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1952. Reprint of a series of articles that appeared in the *Arya* from No. 15 to January 1921.

Kena Upanishad—Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1952. Reprint of a series of articles that had appeared in the *Arya* in 1915 and 1916.

A Glossary of Sanskrit Terms in the Life Divine—Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1952.

The Supramental Manifestation upon Earth—Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1952. Reprint of articles that appeared in the *Bulletin of Physical Education* in 1949 and 1950.

Letters of Sri Aurobindo on the Mother—Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1952.

Messages of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother—Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1952.

Life—Literature—Yoga—New Letters with Questions—Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1952. Reprinted from *Mother India*, a monthly review.

Sayings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother—Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1952.

Last Poems—Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1952, all in facsimile and types.

1953

Elements of Yoga—(new letters with questions)—Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1953, replies to questions put between 1935-36.

The Message and Mission of Indian Culture—Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1953.

Eight Upanishads—Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1953.

The Future Poetry—1st edition, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1953. Reprint, revised, with additions to chapters that appeared in the *Arya* from December 1917 to July 1920. An entirely new view of evaluating poetry indicating the future line of its development.

The Foundation of Indian Culture—1st edition, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1953. Reprinted from the *Arya* in which it appeared under the titles: *Is India Civilised?* Vol. V. No. 5; Vol. V. No. 7; *A Rationalistic Critic on Indian Culture*, Vol V. No. 7; Vol. V. No. 12; *A Defence of Indian Culture*, Vol. VI, No.1; Vol. VII. No. 6; *Indian Culture and External Influence*, Vol. V. No. 8.

Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother—Collection of letters and notes given by Sri Aurobindo on different occasions, concerning his life, his activities, political and other and his spiritual experiences.

It is the first volume of "Sri Aurobindo International University Centre Collection".

The Mind of Light—E.P. Dutton & Co., New York, 1953. Reprint of the *Supramental Manifestation upon Earth* with a different title.

VII

Biography of Sri Aurobindo by Kulkarni—A Criticism

Yogi Sri Aurobindo Ghose by *P.B. Kulkarni*, 1935. With a preface by *K. G. Deshpande*—225 pages.

This is a biography of Sri Aurobindo, the only one of its kind, I believe, in the Marathi language. Mr. Kulkarni has done his work

very conscientiously. He has tried to give as many details as he could get from various sources. He has not been content to give Sri Aurobindo's biography only up to his political career but has lead it up to his residence at Pondicherry and has even taken pains to give an idea of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and the Ashram. Like some biographers he has not lamented the retirement of Sri Aurobindo from the field of politics, but has tried to understand and appreciate his spiritual urge and the importance of his work in that field. In this respect Mr. Kulkarni's effort is superior to some others by persons incapable of understanding spirituality. If spiritual life, if Yoga and the realisation of God has to be left out from or minimised in the life of Sri Aurobindo then the effort of writing the biography may as well be given up. But Mr. Kulkarni's book suffers from many factual inaccuracies and at places one finds in it an effort to represent Sri Aurobindo as the author would like to see a budding Yogi. Even the preface written by Srijut K.G. Deshpande is not free from these errors. Some of these inaccuracies may be pointed out here.

1. Mr. Kulkarni says that Sri Aurobindo's father was a religious minded man which is not quite true. It is certain that Dr. K.D. Ghose was a very generous man and that he had rare capacities of head and qualities of heart. Also he ruled like an uncrowned king both at Rangpur and Khulna where he served, as the District Medical Officer. Dr. K.D. Ghose had leanings towards the Brahmo Samaj before he went to Europe, but after his return he was an atheist and an agnostic.

2. Mr. Kulkarni speaks of Sri Aurobindo's residence in England as if it was a period of very serious life almost befitting the preparation of a future Yogi. This part of the biography is more conjectural than real. Sri Aurobindo was very busy with himself perhaps, and took a lot of interest in many things. The fact is that Sri Aurobindo had no active spiritual tendency during his stay in England.

3. Besides Mr. Kulkarni attributes Sri Aurobindo's political views to his connection with the Fabian Society. But it is definite that Sri Aurobindo had no connection with the Fabian Society and it played no part whatever in the formation of his political views which he had arrived at independently. Not that he did not know

about the existence of the Fabian Society or about the Irish movement, but he did not owe his inspiration for Indian political freedom to any of these things.

4. Mr. Kulkarni says that Sri Aurobindo was introduced to the Gaekwar by Mr. Henry Cotton. In fact, it was Henry Cotton's brother who knew Sri Aurobindo's eldest brother, Binoy Bhushan Ghose, who introduced him to the Gaekwar.

5. Mr. Kulkarni says that it was one Swami Hamsa that gave Sri Aurobindo the first introduction to the practice of Yoga especially that of Pranayama. It is true that one Swami Hamsa came to Baroda and was giving lectures on Dharma. But Sri Aurobindo heard his lectures in the Baroda Palace where he went on invitation. He never went to the Swami's place to consult him, nor did he take any information or instruction from him about Pranayama. Sri Aurobindo at that time was not interested in Yoga. Also he was not impressed by the Swami.

6. Mr. Kulkarni seems to suggest that Sri Aurobindo was seeking Satsang—good and holy company—at Baroda and that on his return from England was buried in religious books like the Veda, the Upanishads and the Shastras in general. This is not true. He was reading all kinds of books at Baroda and among them were books on ancient Indian culture also. He was not specially seeking out good company, his circle of friends at Baroda was rather limited. He was not a man of society.

I believe some of these errors of Mr. Kulkarni are due to his placing an unquestioning reliance on Mr. K.G. Deshpande's information. It is true that Sri Aurobindo knew Mr. Deshpande in England as a student though he was not intimate with him. He subsequently met him at Baroda where both were serving. But in the details concerning Sri Aurobindo's life Mr. Deshpande has been unconsciously inaccurate at several places.

I shall point out here some inaccuracies from the Preface of Mr. Deshpande :—

1. He says that Sri Aurobindo attended a Grammer School at Manchester. He never went to any such school .

2. He says that Sri Aurobindo learnt Sanskrit from one Bhasker Shashtri Joshi. In fact Sri Aurobindo began Sanskrit by himself while in England and continued his studies at Baroda where

he read the Maha bharat, the Ramayana, works of Kalidasa and Bhava Bhuti by himself. If he talked with any one on the subject it was to get information and compare notes—not to learn language.

3. He mentions Mohanpuri Goswami as one who gave Sri Aurobindo the Devi Upasana. This Devi Upasana was not taken for spiritual purpose by Sri Aurobindo. It was with a political purpose that he took the Shakti Mantra from Mohanpuri—not for his own Yoga.

4. He says that Sri Aurobindo resigned from the National College because he had differences with the National Council of Education. This is not quite true. There was difference of view-point but no clash of policy with regard to the National College. When the first *Bande Mataram* began, Sri Aurobindo himself sent in his resignation in order not to embarrass the Council of Education. They re-appointed him on his acquittal. It was when the Alipore trial began that they were obliged to ask for his resignation.

These are some of the important corrections. It is a matter of great regret that Mr. Deshpande is dead since. Had he been alive I am sure I would have found it very easy to get these corrections accepted by him.

I do hope that Mr. Kulkarni will make these corrections in the next edition of the biography, or perhaps authoritative biography of Sri Aurobindo may appear in English during the interval in which Mr. Kulkarni may well find the occasion suitable to attempt another biography based on authentic material.

VIII

Biography of Sri Aurobindo by Girija Shankar Roy Chowdhury—A Criticism

"Sri Aurobindo" "Udbodhan" by *Girija Shankar Roychowdhuri*

1. The sources Girija draws upon are not accurate and therefore his conclusions, opinions and judgments are naturally falsified. e. g. :—

(a) He draws upon Hem Chandra Kanungo's book—*Banglay Biplava Pracheshta* and takes it for granted that Hemchandra's versions, information, etc. are accurate. It is not true. One instance will suffice,—Hem actually believes that *Bhavani Mandir* pamphlet was written by Devavrat! Everyone knows it was written by Sri Aurobindo.

More staggering is the principle which Girija enunciates that "The account given by Hem being not contradicted has now become history". It means, if any one circulates or prints a number of lies, or inaccuracies either about a great person, or a movement, or a cause and if, no one cares to contradict it in writing, all that stuff attains the dignity of history! The first task of one who claims to write objectively should be to sift and critically examine his data, his sources. Girija does not do it and therefore his account is not accurate, and not dependable.

(b) Girija relies, in the second instance, on personal talks, reports and impressions of certain relations of Sri Aurobindo; for example, he often quotes Barindra and Sarojini. Here also he is relying on a slender evidence, because Barin in his autobiography actually admits that his "memory is unreliable" and the remarkable thing about his autobiography is that at no place he gives any dates or even the year!

(c) The greatest drawback of the book is that Girija does not seem to be an impersonal seeker of the Truth of Sri Aurobindo's biography. He is already a partisan even when he begins his so-called biography.

He admits that "events and facts are not explicable" and yet claims to explain genius and personality.

From the very beginning he seems to be a pleader trying to use and search out materials to support his opinions and conclusions.

One such illustration is furnished by Girija's speech at Tangail (Udbodhan). He has tried to show that Sri Aurobindo was not only influenced in his mind by Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Vivekananda—in fact most of the educated Indians are for the the last 40 years,—but that he owes his Yoga and spirituality to them, which is not true at all.

In his enthusiasm to prove the "Prabhava"—influence—of Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, Girija forgets that one of the

quotations he gives from *Dharma* actually refers to a *celebration* at Belur in March 1910, when Sri Aurobindo was at Chandernagore! How could he have come to Calcutta without being recognised ? and how could he have written the article *before* the actual celebration took place ?

Girija has been led into this error by his hasty and unwarranted assumption that "all that has appeared in the *Dharma* was written by Sri Aurobindo". The fact is that all that he quotes from *Dharma* in his speech as having been written by Sri Aurobindo is *not* his. I have ascertained the authorship of the articles quoted by Girija and I can state on definite authority that these *are not* Sri Aurobindo's articles.

I have already indicated that Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda influenced, and are influencing, the intellectual outlook of a very great section of educated Indians and we can go further and gladly admit that the inquiring mind of seeking humanity to-day has not remained untouched by their influence.

But if the speaker (Girija) wants to prove that the life and method of Sadhana—not the mental outlook—of Sri Aurobindo were influenced by Ramakrishna and Vivekananda—I think it is not a tenable proposition. If Sri Aurobindo was so influenced and owed his spirituality entirely to Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, the most natural thing for him would have been to join the Ramakrishna Mission. Besides, one cannot always make much, even of spiritual help and influence which, after all, is bound to take place in life based on interchange and exchange of mutual influences. The only living person from whom Sri Aurobindo received direct spiritual help and guidance was the late Vishnu Bhaskar Lele. Their connection as Guru and disciple seems to have lasted three months and it terminated with a clear understanding on both sides. The fact that Ramakrishna was under the guidance of Bharati for eleven years doing Tantric Sadhana under her and that of Totapuri for one year for Vedantic Sadhana need not detract in the least from his own greatness. If Sri Aurobindo wrote a number of articles in the *Dharma* it does not by itself show that that was the only influence, or a dominant influence even at that time in moulding his spiritual personality. A great personality even when it accepts alien influence, succeeds in creating out of it something unique; but here the articles

supposed to be written by Sri Aurobindo are all topical and refer to occasions like birthday-celebrations in some of which the individual is supposed to be present. It is very well-known that Sri Aurobindo at this time was at Chandernagore and could not have been present at the festivals. The line of argument which Mr. Roy Choudhury adopts can be turned to absurdity if one argues for instance that because Sri Aurobindo wrote "*Gitar Bhumika* in the *Dharma*, it shows that he was under the influence of the Gita". Equally it can be even maintained that since he spoke about Sri Krishna in the *Uttarpara Speech* he was very much influenced by Sri Krishna. He translated the Kena and the Katha Upanishads at this time, therefore he was greatly influenced by these Upanishads. Well, this is a wrong way of explaining or understanding, or rather misunderstanding a great personality. With all his anxiety "to prove"—"*praman karivar*"—the writer has not been able to convince us in what exact way was Sri Aurobindo influenced by Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda except that he had great admiration for them. The fact is that a genius assimilates all influences and stimulating forces and creates out of himself the miracle of his personality which has not yet been explained by known processes of psychology.

It is known beyond doubt that the articles referred to by Girija were not written by Sri Aurobindo but by one Ramchandra.

Points of criticism :

1. Too much extraneous material introduced, very little material dealing with Sri Aurobindo's biography.

2. He claims to reproduce the environment and atmosphere of Sri Aurobindo's life. But that is not possible; because the writer is bound to reproduce his own selection from the milieu and not emphasise those elements which may have played a part in Sri Aurobindo's life. Therefore the picture of the environment and the atmosphere tends to become out of focus and unconvincing. It appears more or less a guess work of the writer. It is the individual concerned who can say what part the known and the unknown elements of his surroundings played in the formation of his personality. An outsider, or an observer, cannot know it.

3. Girija claims to explain Sri Aurobindo's genius and personality, but all his explanations are inferences and guesses. One illustration can be given. If heredity and environment are sufficient to explain personality and genius how does Girija explain the difference in the growth and life of the three brothers who had the same parents, went through the same environment and were educated in England together ? And why is it that Tagore's son has not become a world-famous poet ?

So, there are *factual errors, inferential errors and errors based on wrong sources.*

4. In the last issue of the *Udbodhana* recently printed Girija has comitted a great error when he states that the series of articles on passive resistance in the *Bande Mataram* were written by Bepin Pal ! We know on unimpeachable authority that it was all written by Sri Aurobindo.

Detailed examination of Udbodhan :

1. In the issue of Vaishakh 1347 he says that Sri Aurobindo attended a grammar school in Manchester between 1880-1884. This is not true. He never attended any school at Manchester.

2. K. D. Ghosh sent his sons to England. That according to Girija is responsible for Sri Aurobindo's greatness. He forgets that many fathers sent their sons and did not succeed in making their sons great. He holds heredity responsible for Sri Aurobindo's greatness. That also is wrong and unconvincing. In this case genius does seem to draw from the skies, otherwise, how does he explain Ramakrishna Paramahansa who had no heredity and about Shelley who had nobody to justify his greatness on his parental line, and Keats too !

3. His explanation of Sri Aurobindo's failure in the riding-test is probably based on Sarojini's memory, but it is not reliable. He was not playing cards at that time.

4. All the speeches of the Congress Presidents are unnecessarily reproduced in this so-called Biography, because Sri Aurobindo never noticed these speeches.

5. It is false criticism to use poems as materials for biography, unless the poem is expressly known to be autobiographical.

6. Girija's inference based on Brajendranath Seal's supposed criticism that Sri Aurobindo's politics was influenced by Greek culture, is not true.

7. Girija's criticism that Sri Aurobindo has not written drama is not true. He has written dramas.

8. Girija's inference that Nivedita was responsible for Sri Aurobindo's decision to go to Chandernagore is not true. Again, they did not exchange ideas on spirituality. They only met in the political arena because they held identical views and were both revolutionaries. It is true that Nivedita told Sri Aurobindo about the futility of giving himself up to the Government for arrest at any time. Sri Aurobindo felt at that time that he would be able to prevent his arrest. He wrote thereafter an open letter to his countrymen and the Government did not accept his challenge. It is not true that Nivedita came to see him off on board the boat.

9. Girija infers that Sri Aurobindo must have read the works of Ram Mohan Roy. But the fact is that he did not read his works. For a young man in England at that time to have sympathy for Ireland it was not necessary to read Ram Mohan Roy. Many people hold high ideals of humanity, brotherhood, etc. It does not follow that they derive these ideas from one another, it only shows that there is a permanent pull towards idealism in human nature.

10. Girija calls Sri Aurobindo "private secretary" of H.H. Gaekwar. He was never a "private secretary" except in the Kashmir tour in 1903 for a few months when he was a personal secretary.

11. Girija speaks of Sri Aurobindo's studies in Baroda as if Sri Aurobindo was a follower of orthodox Hinduism. This is not a fact. He was not interested in the Shastras in the sense in which orthodox Hindus are. It was Yoga, the practical side of Hindu religion, which attracted him.

12. In the issue of Chaitra 1348 with reference to the year 1895 Girija writes : "Many causes combine to produce an event. We cannot know all the causes, hence we resort to false imagination of various kinds about the causes". As this is the confession of Girija himself I do not see why he insists on explaining the inexplicable.

13. It is not true that Sri Aurobindo was an opponent of Mayavada from the beginning, i.e. from 1896.

14. In the issue of Baisakh, 1348 with reference to the murder of Rend and Aiyerst, it is to be stated that it had nothing to do with him. It is wrong procedure to proceed on the assumption that because a fact occurs in his lifetime it is bound to exercise a tremendous influence on him.

15. In the issue of Baisakh, 1348 he writes: "To young Sri Aurobindo Congress was not a great thing even from its fifth year". If this is so, according to Girija himself, why does he go on describing at length the substance of the presidential addresses and the speeches of the chairmen of the reception committees ?

16. Another instance of Girija's wrong inference is his conclusion based on the meeting of Vivekananda and Rajnarayan Bose on the 3rd of January, 1898. He infers from this fact that Rajnarayan *must* have talked about it to Sri Aurobindo. This is wrong. They had no talk about Vivekananda at all. Sri Aurobindo never read Ram Mohan's Vedanta and according to him Vivekananda is not a Mayavadin. What Vivekananda preached according to him is the universality of the Brahman. With this idea of Vivekananda Sri Aurobindo is in full agreement.

As for Sitanath Tatvabhushan and Devendra Nath Tagore and Rajnarayan Bose Sri Aurobindo never thought that they had any Vedanta worth noticing.

17. Girija says that Sri Aurobindo must have participated in Dadabhai Naroji's election to the British Parliament. This is not true.

18. Girija says that C.R.Das met Sri Aurobindo at Cambridge. This is not true.

19. Girija infers that Sri Aurobindo must have read Phirozshah Mehta and Banerjee's speeches at Cambridge. He did not get Indian papers in England and these speeches never attracted his attention. His patriotism was quite independent of these incidents.

20. In the issue of Ashadh, 1348 Girija tries to conclude that Sri Aurobindo's idea of the need of the amelioration of the proletariat must have been derived from Marx.

This is not correct and not inevitable. Would he explain how Vivekananda got the idea of Daridranarayan ? Was it from Marx ? Such ideas come to great leaders by intuition. His explanation is not only false but the method, in most cases, is bound to lead to false conclusions.

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21. In the issue of Agrahayan, 1348, Girija's idea about Vivekananda's changing from Vedanta to Kali worship and Sri Aurobindo from Shakti worship to Vedanta is fantastic. Vivekananda's instruction to sister Nivedita does not constitute a proof that it was his conversion from Vedanta to Tantra. One cannot lose sight of the fact that Vivekananda was the chief disciple of one who was a lifelong devotee of Kali. Besides Vedanta does not bar Kali worship.

22. He surmises that Sri Aurobindo must have met Devendra Nath Tagore. There is no proof that he met him—as a matter of fact he did not see Devendra Nath Tagore.

23. Girija says that before marriage Sri Aurobindo underwent suddhi by taking cowdung etc. The fact seems to be that there was no shaving of the head, nor taking of the cowdung, or anything of the sort, because Sri Aurobindo refused to take it. The accommodating Brahmin was perhaps satisfied with a certain sum of money paid as Dakshina and must have been pleased to make the concession.

24. In his issue dealing with the year 1900 Girija alleges that there was a revolutionary samiti in Gujarat. From inquiries it can be definitely stated that there was no such samiti at the time. Barin's memory in this respect is absolutely mistaken.

25. In the issue dealing with the year 1902 Girija says that Sarala Devi had gone to Baroda and therefore must have met Sri Aurobindo. This is not a way to arrive at correct facts because persons who happen to be in the same city do not always meet. He met Sarala Devi long after in Bengal.

26. In the Jyaistha, issue of the Udbodhan, 1349, the quotation from Barin's autobiography is not authentic.

27. Girija quotes Surendranath Halder's opinion about Sister Nivedita's being a Nihilist. But that can hardly be taken as an authority on Sister Nivedita.

28. In an issue dealing with 1906, Girija tries to show that Sri Aurobindo's Nationalism might have been derived from Bankim. And even the idea of secret society was taken from him. This is not true because it is very well known that Sri Aurobindo's father had strictly forbidden his children from mixing with Indians or from learning any Indian language while they were in England. So, there is no question of Doctor K.D.Ghosh writing to England about Bankim's death. Thus it is proved that Sri Aurobindo got

the idea of secret society before reading Bankim. One can be a patriot without reading Bankim. Sri Aurobindo's political ideas were formed even when he was in England.

29. In the issue dealing with 1906 Girija says that Sri Aurobindo performed the Bagala Devi Puja by standing on one foot and repeating the mantra. Sri Aurobindo never did the Bagala Sadhana and it is a lie to go on constantly representing him as an orthodox Hindu which he never was.

30. Girija has introduced Girish Chandra Ghose in Sri Aurobindo's biography. What Girish Chandra Ghose had to do with Sri Aurobindo's biography is known only to Girija !

31. Girija quotes the confession of some of the revolutionaries before the Magistrate in support of certain inferences and of some facts. This is not a reliable process, because confessions of such people have value for the defence, as mostly they are prepared by pleaders with a view to extricate the accused. They are hardly written to tell the truth or represent a fact. It is a wonder that Girija being a pleader fails to know this !

32. Girija says that a place on the Shone river was selected by Sri Aurobindo as a centre for the Bhavani Mandir Scheme. The fact is, it was Barin who went to select the place and not Sri Aurobindo. Barin had also gone to the Vindhya mountains to select a centre for the Bhavani Mandir, but he returned with hill-fever to Baroda. It must be remembered that Sri Aurobindo gave Diksha for the revolutionary work not only to Barin but to Hemchandra Kanungo, Pritya Mitter, and others.

33. In the Ashvin issue of 1350 Girija says "Getting rid of infatuation of Western education, his mind was attracted towards Swadeshi things from the beginning". This is not true because there was no infatuation for Western education according to Girija's own statement in the previous issue. In the same issue he says, "It was seen that the way of looking at things was different for the two brothers from the very beginning". But the question is why ? Why is it that two brothers of the same parentage, of equal upbringing, being in the same environment should be or become so different. If heredity and circumstances, as Girija puts in the beginning, can explain personality, then these two at least should have become very similar.

34. In the issue of Ashvin, 1350, Girija quotes a talk or a letter from Barin dating 16-7-1943. This shows that Barin and Priya Mitter were together till 1905. Therefore Girija's contention in the previous issues that Priya Mitter drifted away from Sri Aurobindo on account of Sri Aurobindo's partiality towards Barin in the quarrel between Jatin Bannerji and Barin is not borne out by facts.

35. Another instance of wrong inference based on false evidence is furnished by several people ascribing the authorship of Bhavani Mandir scheme to different persons. Some have ascribed the authorship to Deva Vrata and some to Barin.

If a wrong statement like this remains uncontradicted is it to be accepted as true, as Girija says, it would be a very strange doctrine.

36. In the Jyaistha issue of the Udbodhan, 1351 Girija contends that there was a difference in the standard adopted in case of *Bande Mataram* and the *Yugantar*. He suggests, without affirming, that Sri Aurobindo advised Bhupen Dutt to suffer imprisonment while he offered defence for the prosecution of the *Bande Matram*; hence he was not consistent. This is not true. First of all, *Bande Mataram* was not a mouthpiece of the revolutionary party. It was a political paper with a programme of national reconstruction, passive resistance and self-reliance. It could not be expected to act like a revolutionary paper, for a paper like the *Yugantar*, avowedly revolutionary, it would have been most inconsistent to offer defence. For *Bande Mataram* it was natural that it should take all the advantage that the law could give to defend its liberty.

37. It is not certain whether—as Girija alleges—that Barin gave his confession on Sri Aurobindo's advice. The fact is that Barin gave his confession almost immediately on his arrest at Maniktola; so Girija's representation here is quite wrong.

38. One cannot understand why Girija quotes Morley and Balfour's speeches in Sri Aurobindo's biography and also one cannot understand why he brings in the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha.

39. Girija argues that independence is a mundane affair and spiritual and religious considerations are irrelevent to it. This view is debatable. What does he mean by "mundane considerations" ?

Do not psychological factors count ? And among the psychological factors do not spiritual and religious factors act as most potent ? Was not the rise of the Maratha empire and of the Sikhs in the Panjab primarily due to considerations of factors which might be called religious ? Is no change of psychology necessary before an enslaved people can attain freedom ?

40. It is wrong on the part of Girija to say that Sri Aurobindo preached the doctrine of Deva-Devi grace in politics. He invokes the inherent spiritual reservoir of energy in each individual. He says, in fact, what was said long ago by the Upanishads and the Gita. It is not a cult of worship of little gods and goddesses but the general dependence on the inner spirit, on the Divine Shakti, Bhavani, that is in the race.

41. Girija says also that in modern times people do not believe in religion and in the miracles of spirituality. He forgets that the 20th century is not devoid of its own way of belief in the miraculous. It is the Duces and Furers in whom the most enlightened nations seem to put what Girija might call blind faith. And Girija cannot say that this blind faith of the modern does not lead to power.

42. Repression would crush the nation thought Bepin Pal. Ram Mohan also thought the same way. Sri Aurobindo thought differently. He thought that repression would awaken the nation. This is a matter of opinion.

IX

Hemchandra Kanungo's work—A Criticism

"Banglaya Biplava Prachesta" *by Hemchandra Kanungo*, 1st edition 1928.

1. In this book Hemchandra Kanungo certainly has repeated himself endlessly on orthodoxy, religion, spirituality and caste.

2. It is unreliable as a document. There is neither exactness in dating, nor impartiality and impersonal approach. It is based on a partial view of the movement and is therefore not a true picture because it is not the whole picture.

3. He forgets in his blind anger against Barin and his prejudice against Sri Aurobindo that there were other organisations parallel to those run by these leaders and they did not fare better,—they did not succeed, i.e., they could not bring about the intended revolution and Hemchandra must know they had no spirituality to hamper their work or success!

It was reserved for Mr. Hemchandra Kanungo to announce that the revolution cannot succeed, that India cannot have progress because of the caste system. We know very well the evils of the caste system and its responsibility for many social and economic ills of India. But it was for Mr. Hemchandra to tell us that revolutionary secret society in Bengal failed because of the caste system, religion and spirituality.

Evidently Mr. Hemchandra holds India's religion and spirituality in contempt. He even complains about Swami Vivekananda's inspiring the Indian youths with pride in their past glory and achievements. He is welcome to his own opinion but I am afraid his generalisations are too sweeping to need any detailed refutation. He does not seem to grant any practical ground for religious experience and spiritual discipline. To him Chaitanya and Ramakrishna seem to have not only lived in vain but harmed India by inculcating the truth of religions and spiritual experience. Mr. Hemchandra does not know any difference between orthodoxy and spirituality. To him even Sri Aurobindo is orthodox; and Sanatan Dharma to Hemchandra means only injunctions of Brahminical Smritis which outrage his sense of social justice. He conveniently forgets that the Smritis *are not* being followed to-day in practice; secondly, that Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj,—and the Congress are few of the many all-India organisations that have been trying to carry into practice many social reforms. Thirdly, that Mahatma Gandhi has done more as a single leader than many organisations for the uplift of the untouchables. But there is a saying "none so blind as those that would not see".

To call Sri Ramakrishna orthodox is also an innovation for he practised not only Hinduism but tried Islam and Christianity too. He came to the conclusion that all religions, if followed sincerely as paths for the realisation of God, lead ultimately to the same experience. This is not "Hindu Godami," by any stretch of imagination.

Nor can the definition of Eternal Dharma—"Sanatan Dharma"—given by Sri Aurobindo in his Uttarpara speech be dubbed orthodox by any one except by the purblind.

The author holds religion for the failure of the revolutionary movement ! He even asserts that religion is of no help in the regeneration of India. If he wants to maintain thereby that politics should be secular to suit modern conditions of humanity we should all agree. But it is not true as an axiom of political science which Mr. Hemchandra seems to enunciate. The Maratha Empire which was brought into existence by Shivaji owed its origin to religious inspiration. So was Sikhism responsible for the power of the Khalsa in the Punjab. All students of world's history will certainly remember how the Islamic political power that spread over Asia, Africa and Europe owed its inspiration to religion.

Mr. Hemchandra is very discursive; instead of giving us a matter of fact narration of the secret society organisation he breaks off into sermons on how the work should have been done, how the leaders should have led and the followers followed ! It is a pity Mr. Hemchandra is not being listened to by those to whom he addressed his sermons. Thus the narrative suffers from the same defects from which all the other accounts of the revolutionary workers suffer, i.e. it concentrates on a very narrow portion of a vast background the whole of which was not known to any of them. Thus when each describes, discusses and generalises on the basis of his own experience about the *whole* movement, naturally most of the labour seems wasted. We have to remember that the organisation being a secret one it is not correct to expect that each one would be and must be told everything. It is not only not possible but absolutely undesirable if a secret movement is justified and necessary. To say naively, like Mr. Hemchandra, that the whole country should have been given a clear conception of the shape of things that would follow a successful revolution, is, in my opinion, only too childish and would be only putting the cart before the horse. Let Mr. Hemchandra remember that the French Revolution gave the French people no ghost of an idea as to what exactly was to follow the revolution, nor was Italian revolution more clear about its shape before it succeeded. These things a living nation goes on learning and achieving at the same time. What did the American

know about Federal Court when they declared war against England ?

I will show where and how Mr. Hemchandra is incorrect and unreliable and contradicts himself at places:

1. He attributes the Bhavani Mandir scheme to Barin.

2. He asserts that spiritual discipline was imposed on members of the revolutionary party which obviously is not true. It is also surprising to find that Barin was anxious to have him in the organisation after his return from Europe. Why should he be anxious if spirituality was the necessary qualification ?

Where is the proof that people who wanted to join the secret society were compelled to practise meditation. That he was admitted shows there was no compulsion.

3. If some of the members of the secret society like Deva Vrata, Barin etc. had spiritual tendency and if they practised meditation how could any objection be taken to it ? Men like Barin, Deva Vrata, Ullasa were free to follow their bent.

4. Hemchandra is not correct in reporting his meeting with 'C' Babu, i.e., Charu Chandra Dutta, after his return from Europe. I had occasion to meet Mr Dutta on this point and I can say on his authority that Hemchandra Kanungo's report is far from accurate.

5. His account of the differences between Barin and Jatin Banerji is not reliable. Firstly, he could not have known everything because he was very recently recruited at Midnapore and the whole incident took place at Calcutta. The work was in a very early stage and so Hemchandra could only have heard reports afterwards in circulation and had no impartial attitude to come to a correct decision.

6. Hemchandra's explanation about the working of plague regulations at Poona is very poor. It shows he does not know the real reasons behind the action of Chapekar brothers.

Mr. Girijashanker while writing Sri Aurobindo's biography has relied on these very undependable sources and he has not only erred in regard to facts but has even accepted their personal opinions as impartial judgments on mere events and has, in my opinion, very often gone off the track.

7. It was up to Hemchandra to give the lead if he found the other leaders were not up to the mark. What about those leaders

he does not speak about? No one put up the worship of P. Mitter and other leaders of the Anushilan Samity ? The story of their work does not figure at all in Hemchandra's work. Why did not that branch with its thousands of members succeed ? Whereas this one with Barin and Sri Aurobindo had only 50 members and was small in size. Hemchandra is not right in saying that the work of Barin constituted the whole of revolutionary movement.

In any great national movement there is certainly chance that the leaders may so lead that the movement having all the chances of success might come to nothing. But there is another alternative also which Hemchandra has not even noticed that the nation may not be capable of more than it achieves at a certain stage of its development. Let Hemchandra image or consider Bengal as she was *before* 1900 and let him then measure the change that has been brought about by political events and by leadership.

One would not think of taking Mr. Hemchandra's book seriously and critising it. But you find that Mr. Girijashanker in his so-called biography of Sri Aurobindo states Hemchandra's uncontradicted conclusions as authentic ones.

8. It is strange that Mr. Hemchandra, who writes so much against religion in the book, was not averse to using religious symbols while he was actually in the revolutionary movement.

Here is what "Alipore Bomb Trial" says :

"Witness No. 82 Debdas Karan : deposed that "Medini Bandhava" a Midnapore paper, had the crest of lion and unicorn. This crest was changed to Jagaddhatri Goddess. Change was due to Hemchandra Kanunga !

Exhibit No. 876 : Letter of Hemchandra to Debdas. So, it was not only Sri Aurobindo and other leaders who introduced Hindu symbols, it was also Mr. Hemchandra Kanungo !